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A LITTLE LESS THAN GODS

*A Napoleonic Tale*

*A Partial List of Other Books by*

**FORD MADDOX FORD**

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A LITTLE LESS  
THAN GODS



NEW YORK  
THE VIKING PRESS  
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## To

RENE KATHERINE CLARISSA DAVID

*My dear,*

When you were in pigtails and adorably starched, stiff little frilly things, and I, oh dear, as slender as a gazelle, we walked in Central Park and you asked me to tell you a tale. . . . Here it is, then, your Tale.

The penalties with which you threatened me if I did not then entertain you with diverting and mendacious inventions were many and singular. Like the tailor's son in the fairy tale that you will not let me quote, I evaded them by running away . . . to Philadelphia. And there—this is the curious part of it—that evening, sitting on the stoop of Miss Mary Moss, I heard the story of this one that at last I lay at your feet. Miss Mary Moss was an amiable lady, at that time the literary dictatrix of the Quaker City and its environs, and the stoop was in Chestnut Hill. So I sat there gazing into the boskage and the night and listening to the nightingales—but they cannot have been nightingales, they must have been katydids! No doubt because I must have been thinking of you and your Tale, and because I was sitting between a daughter of Stonewall Jackson and a niece of General Sherman, they come back to me as nightingales. . . . At any rate, the talk falling on old days, the Southern lady told how in her youth she had seen—or perhaps it was only that

her mother had seen—in New Orleans an old, mild gentleman who possessed a singular sword and was accustomed, gently and unemotionally, to assert that he was . . . Michael Ney, soon to be a little dust! He did not, we should say today, propose to do anything about it. If you believed him he was faintly gratified, but if you signified that you did not he was never angered.

It was particularly the sword that impinged upon my sensibilities—for, if the old gentleman were not Michael Ney, how should he know about the sword?

Anyhow, this story seems to me to be particularly yours. I have carried it about with me for many years always meaning to have a shot at it, and in the end it was in your city that I began it and in your city that it ended it.

At one time it was to have become a collaboration with another writer, but the years went on and, I going to Another Place than here or the usual haunts of collaboration, that writer took on the story alone. But a lamented death cut short his story, so I considered myself at liberty to take it on again myself, and the psychological moment seeming to me—on an occasion that you will remember—to have arrived about three years ago, here then at last it is.

The story of Michael Ney was always in my mind destined to be seen through the eyes of a character whose history I might well have related to you in Central Park for it had enormously impressed my own childish mind. In England, that is to say, near Malvern Wells is a green hill called the Herefordshire Beacon and in the shadow of the Herefordshire Beacon towards the West is a Man-

whose name will not come back to me. Let us call it Scrope Hall. I was in Malvern Wells for the holidays of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee year. . . . How old was I then? You at any rate were not here in this world nor yet to come for many years! . . . And wandering through that hop- and apple-country I came one day on the old manor. In the hall were many portraits, no doubt of surpassing artistic value. But what impressed the boy of thirteen was one that was hung with its face to the wall. And on the back of the panel was the inscription:

VANISHED INTO THE AMERICAS IN 1815 THE YEAR  
OF WATERLOO

From what I could gather from the butler, this was a portrait of an eldest son of the family owning the manor—an eldest son who had committed the crime of admiring Napoleon and doing his best to prevent war. He was said to have fled to this country and to have founded here a flourishing family—in Louisiana, I think. . . . At any rate that young man—whose face even in counterfeit I never saw—was always destined in my mind to be the person through whose eyes you should see *The Hundred Days*. And when I looked up his history in County Records long afterwards I found that part of the discredit that there attached to him arose from a sentimental misfortune such as here you may read. So the story is in effect in some sort a page from intimate history.

I must however warn you against taking too literally as fact the mere opinions expressed by the persons in this narrative. Madame de Frèjus was a lady of strong views and such ladies will colour their accounts of the actions

of others. Napoleon was a politician; the Duke of Wellington had a bad memory for names. . . . So if Madame de Frèjus is hard on, say, Benjamin Constant, or the Duke of Wellington thinks that Ney was arrested at Auxerre or Napoleon states that your country and mine were at war in March 1815, remember that politics, prejudice and failures of memory will come creeping in. Nor, in the matter of that, if, say the late Lord Kitchener or Regimental Sergeant-Major Evans of my battalion of the Welsh Regiment could have seen Napoleon's march from Frèjus to Cannes, would they have as much admired the marching and discipline of the forces as did George Feilding. Feilding however was a hero-worshipper. There are perhaps worse vehicles for the conveyance of illusions.

The business of all novelists is to trick you into believing you have taken part in the scenes that they render. But the historical novelist is on the horns of a dilemma: he must either present you with the superficial view of history given by the serious and scientific Historian to whom no one is more misleading, or diving deeper he must present you with the mendacities in which mankind is so prone to indulge when treating of contemporary events and its immediate fellows. For who are we to know the truth?

When you and I—heaven help us!—talk about the historic present, how do we render it? I remember you some years ago aboard ship, giving me an account of some of your present presidential candidates—an account which lively and diverting as it was will probably long square with the verdict of Posterity. And I must have given you in my time accounts of—let us say—battles which will differ widely either from our or Enemy official

accounts. So if in future years a Historical Novelist should take you for his delightful heroine and me—save the mark!—for his central character . . . if that historical novelist, so on the one hand perspicacious and on the other dumb!—should choose to present our present by means of our conversations, how wouldn't he differ from the conscientious future Annalist of our poor little Today! He may nevertheless convey a sense of the Truth truer than that reached by the industrious compilings of the serious—and so portentous!—Chronicler! For I bet that your sense—not your details—of mediæval life came to you from Scott and your mental colouration of seventeenth-century France from *The Three Musketeers*, and that, fill in your details afterwards how you may have, your sense and your mental colouration are truer to the real right thing in history than all the mole-work lucubrations of the most learned of contemporary Puffendorfishes. Or should I write Puffendorfi? For the worst historical novelist is better for giving you a vicarious sense of experience than the most industrious of compilers of scientific evidence. And the novelist is there to give you a sense of vicarious experience. What without him would you know?

That being his job he is almost forced to make you view his History through the eyes of a character supposedly present at the scenes that he renders. But as, disrespectfully, I have hinted above, no one is so inaccurate as an eyewitness. I have read I do not know how many accounts of Napoleon's escape from Elba and his subsequent march on Paris, each written by a participant in those events; yet each account differs inextricably from every other.

*Dedication*

Above all they all differ entirely from the final account arrived at by the Official Historians. So what is the poor historical novelist to do? I suppose if he were veracious and mad rather than an artist he would put a “?” after most speeches of his characters and a “sic” after the rest!

Anyhow, in the end, the proof of the pudding remains in the eating. And I have the consolation of thinking that if your hypercritical taste turns from these pages that are laid at your feet you at least can take refuge in the writings of authors more attractive.

I on the other hand am condemned to remain for ever

Humbly and obediently your servant.

F. M. F.

*Off Nantucket, JULY 28, 1928.*

PART

I







## CHAPTER ONE

“**Y**OUNG man,” his Britannic Majesty’s Representative upon Elba remarked, “—for that you are young my long acquaintance with your family and the fact that I was present at your christening sufficiently assure me, and I see no reason to doubt that you are a man— if you should now make any violent manifestations of sympathies or commit yourself to any other step, you may well find that you will have cause for regret such as the best of your life shall be insufficient to obliterate. I appeal to Mr. Assheton Smith to corroborate me.” Mr. Assheton Smith, however, was engaged in taking snuff from a heavily jewelled box and young Feilding burst in hotly:

“If I did not now express those generous feelings that should belong to every Englishman of honour at the contemplation of this unjustly caged eagle, I might well regret for the rest of my days upon earth. To do anything else would be to stand confessed the accomplice of those who have treacherously bound the arms of a demi-god and contemplate his assassination.”

He was in the scarlet, with heavily fringed gold epaulettes and white worsted galoons, of the Monmouthshire Yeomanry. The natural grace of his actions was impeded by the fact that he held in front of his chest, as gentlemen in church hold high hats, a high, black shako deco-

rated with the royal arms in silver and a pom-pom scarlet worsted. The British envoy was in the blue Windsor field uniform—a long blue coat, slightly cut away, white kersimere breeches, and white silk stockings. He wore several orders in high relief. Mr. Assheton Smith was in something that resembled the Windsor uniform except that to indicate his contempt for privy councillors, members of the cabinet, the diplomatic body and such, his silver gilt buttons bore his own initials; and to indicate that he despised the peerage he had neither accepted nor did he wear orders, ribbons or stars. In revenge he had on his fob-chain a great collection of massive seals. His hair was fair and curled elegantly; his face more disdainful than seemed probable; he maintained his mouth half closed, and his white, very long hands managed snuff-taking with singular deliberation. The dark, brown paint of the tall, long room had mildewed and fallen in places; there were upon the wall too few canvases to illuminate it very thoroughly. Young girls, in dresses very short, their hair almost shorter, ran as young girls will in and out of the room as if in quest of one another, uttering little ejaculations and silhouetted against the brighter light of the doorway giving into another room. From there came the thrilling of faint, light stringed instruments.

"Stap me," Mr. Assheton Smith finally said, "it is my duty to be grateful to God that we are Britons; but we can see no difference in degree of upstartness between the one hand Wellesley—or, I beg his pardon, what is his title, Marquis or Duke—between, then, this Wellesley or Wellington and this Corsican. For myself I would more

ingly call Bonaparte 'Sire' or 'Majesty' than the other 'Your Grace'! It is the duty of men of birth to stand together against younger sons, military adventurers, and the rabble, but if a man be one of these, or no Englishman, it makes little matter to me whether he be Louis XVIII, king by Divine Right, or Bonaparte, Emperor by the love of his people. What, for instance, are the Romanoffs, as they call themselves, who sit on the throne of Russia? What is this Alexander but an anointed and gloomy upstart prone under the thumb of a designing Cossy? He is Emperor, but God knows who was his father. I have seen him, an incomparable, gloomy fool, possessing neither language nor deportment, I detest him as much as I detest this Wellesley or Wellington or whatever he is. Marquis of Douro, no doubt."

He paused to replace his snuff box in his pocket and so great was the respect which he inspired in his companions on account of his birth, his enormous wealth, his disdain, and his reputation as a nonchalant duelist, gamester and follower of hounds, that neither of them spoke for fear of interrupting him. Nor did either of them consider his remarks to be either vainglorious or foolish.

"Still, sir," the diplomat said, when he had paused long enough to see that the milor did not intend to continue, "you would not indulge in treason yourself nor advocate its being indulged in by this young man, the heir of our old friend, Squire Feilding?"

"Treason!" young Feilding exclaimed, hot with his youth and his admiration for one of the attendants upon Madame Mère, the mother of Napoleon, "what is this talk of treason? I vow . . ."

But a gesture of the white right hand of Assheton Smith interrupted him.

"I perceive no treason," he said dryly, "in proclaiming that by proxy we are treating this Bonaparte with execrable shabbiness and by allowing the Bourbons and the Romanoffs to maintain him here upon this barren rock we expose him to such great danger of assassination that it is all one with murder. For myself if he could overthrow that Alexander and this Wellesley, I should be glad to be still."

The British Representative drew himself slightly together.

"Surely, Mr. Smith," he said, "that would be a treasonable gladness that should not be expressed before this young hothead, for Napoleon could only defeat the Duke of Wellington over the bodies of your countrymen."

Mr. Smith answered with disdainful nonchalance.

"No sir," he said, "I yield to none in loyalty to my country and I agree that *maxima debetur reverentia pueris*. But if this Corsican upstart—as I hope he may—should escape from this rock and if Wellington, as too much hope may be the case, should fail to induce the government to engage with its former low allies against this man, Wellington as an upstart Parliament man would fall. I would plunge us into wars to add another strawberry to his coronet. And wars are monstrous inconvenient things. I assure you that during the late one my revenue from my slate quarries was much diminished owing to want of shipping. . . . But, for this boy, I see no reason why he should not express a generous enthusiasm for

Bonaparte—for I will admit that Madame de Frèjus is a monstrous pretty piece.”

The young man choked in his throat.

“Sir,” he exclaimed when he had recovered himself, “do you mean that my sentiments are nothing but parroted repetitions of that lady’s opinions?”

“You have it, my lad,” Mr. Smith replied kindly. “What else could have retained you for a quarter upon this rock? And you might have done worse! I say that as a very good friend of your father’s, for at least you are not squandering his estates in the rake-helly night resorts of *La Ville Lumière*—as they call Paris because of the expenditure of a few beggarly tallow candles.”

The music had ceased so that the emotions of the young man had full play. Groups of maidens and youths who fetched glasses of negus began to form in the apartment. It was true that the young man had been three months upon that island, but not even to himself had he formulated his attachment. Madame de Frèjus, the daughter of the *émigré*, Marquis de Dinart-Périgord, a former very close friend of his father, Squire Feilding, and married to a rather suspect financier such as those troubled times had brought to the fore . . . Hélène de Frèjus, then, was an attendant on Madame Letitia, the mother, and Princess Pauline, the sister, of Bonaparte, then King of Elba. And it was true too that his utterances in hot championship of the august exile and in hot denunciation of the treatment meted out to him by the Bourbons, Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Romanoffs, and their minions who were Bonaparte’s jailers—his fierce and splendid utterances at whose eloquence he was at times himself astonished, were



mostly repetitions of speeches that had been made either by the Princess Pauline or Madame de Frèjus. But at that moment he could not have told you for which of them he was ready to lay down his life. Nay, he might have been ready to lay down his life for the Emperor's mother.

He had lived for three months amidst an agreeable flood of petticoat emotions. The Princess Pauline with her oblique glance of her dark, oval eyes could make his heart beat confoundedly; a smile from the frank, fair, almost English face of Madame la Baronne de Frèjus, who was nearer his own age, could warm the whole of his blood; the dry, practical humour of the Emperor's mother was a daily source of admiration to him. She was august, commanding, dry, withered, sardonic, shrewd. Then too there were the almost daily communings that, seated beneath his favourite olive tree, the Emperor allowed to himself. George Feilding! It was a period of delight.

He, George Feilding, was of goodish family: there might be none better in England, which is the same as to say in Europe or the habitable globe. It was true too that the Demi-God made no bones about his desire to be favourably reported on in England. So Feilding perhaps deserved the condescension that Napoleon bestowed upon him; nevertheless he could not but marvel at times at the circumstances that brought him to stand in that garden, having the blue Mediterranean behind his back, the whisper of the olive leaves in his ears, and before him only the steep mountains of which Elba formed the point—not only those but the Conqueror of the World . . . a peak amongst men such as Alexander, Cæsar, Hercules, or Timour the Tartar had not reached to.



He would sit there in a willow-work chair or on a bench that was built round the great old olive tree, in repose. His eye would not flash but neither was it veiled. It was contemplative; but sometimes it sparkled a little as when he talked of his plantations of mulberry trees for the good of the subjects of his tiny realms. For it was such things that occupied the thoughts of this hero in repose and aroused his enthusiasms, though every now and then his wrath would rise up terrible for a moment at the thought of the sufferings of his France under the grotesque and detestable Bourbons. Of the fact that Louis the Eighteenth did not pay him the beggarly pittance that was allotted to him by treaty he would speak with humour rather than with anger. The king of France was gross, heavy, besotted, indolent and so fat and infirm that he could scarcely walk. Perhaps the gout would not permit him to hold a pen so that he could not sign the mandate for payment of his debt to Napoleon.

On the plan of Metternich and others at the Congress of Vienna that was interminably sitting—to kidnap him and export him to St. Helena—he spoke with mild contempt. He had his thousand soldiers. And the word of England! England was all-powerful in the counsels of the nations and was proud of her honour. He would be well content to settle as a private gentleman in England. If England had supported the presence of Louis and his crowds of beggarly, parasitic *émigrés* why should she not welcome the residence of him, General Bonaparte, who, in spite of the robberies of the Bourbons, could yet at least pay his way—as witness his expenditure for the good of the subjects of his little realm. The plantations, the rebuilt for-

tresses, the reopening of the iron mines! All these he had set going out of his private purse. He could assure Mr. Feilding that if he should ever bring himself to leave the island his subjects would not be those in the world that least regretted his departure. And he would glance down at the sleeve of his shabby old coat, as if to emphasize the fact that, though the Bourbons caused him personally to go short of raiment, bedding, candle-sconces, tapestries, kitchen utensils, saddlery or servants' liveries, his subjects did not suffer. The disgrace to the Bourbons was what was to be emphasized. They owed tribute to the hero in repose—nay, they owed hospitality to an honourable guest! They showed the world the spectacle of the heroes of Ulm and Jena short of under-linen!

Once he wore the all-famous green coat of Marengo, no doubt as a treat for young Feilding, or perhaps to let him better to dream of past discharges of artillery and of the smoke of combat, for that day he had seemed almost a dreamer and spoke little. He had no doubt his days of preoccupation or bad health. Days when his hand remained continually in the opening of his waistcoat between the first and third buttons from the top and when young Feilding would move away unnoticed to hear Madame de Frèjus over her sewing or Princess Pauline over her book, take up the engrossing tale of their devotion, their hopes or their sisterly love. . . .

When he reported these days of preoccupation to the British Resident, Sir Neil would say:

"You see. That confirms me!"

He held the opinion that Napoleon was fast sinking into lethargy and sloth. He held that opinion firmly in spite

of the energetic protests of the younger man, but at times he would confess himself puzzled and alarmed. As he expressed it, the old fox might simulate a state of palsy in order to mask some design. . . . A descent on France. Or Italy? Who knows?

At that too the young Feilding was indignant. Who could suspect the Demi-God of dissimulation? As well think to conceal the thunderbolts of Jove himself. Look how frankly he talked. Look at his projects for the betterment of the island, all in embryo! Would such a man put his hand to the plough and then leave the task? As young Feilding read Napoleon he was a philosopher, retired from the shock of war and content to recline forever beneath the symbolical shade of the olive whilst watching over and guiding the pursuits of his adoring peasantry.

Sir Neil would say:

"It may be so. Who can tell? There are things that disquiet me. Why did he send away four hundred of his soldiers? As emissaries into France? Or Italy? Why this embargo on the shipping? He professes to fear for his personal safety and will not let ship leave the island until everyone come by ship is examined, searched, produces credentials and the rest. And there are other things. . . ."

Young Feilding remained hot in the illusion of Napoleon's determination to be for the rest of his life the benevolent, rustic philosopher. That was a thing fashionable in those days. Sir Neil stuck to his guns—of doubt impermed by belief in the Emperor's diseased lethargy.

The difference rose to a practical quarrel on the arrival of Mr. Assheton Smith's yacht on the afternoon of that

day of the dance. For Assheton Smith's beautiful, felucca-rigged yacht was reputed to be the fastest vessel afloat on those seas, as she was the most luxuriously appointed. The famous milor whose glories, spleen and disdain were the talk of the world had touched at the island for a visit of a few hours. He designed to view its scenery, the appointments of Napoleon's parody of a palace, and to exchange a condescending word or two with the distinguished exile. For Assheton Smith, who was the richest commoner in the world, liked to be not only the most admired man in such company as he deigned to frequent, but also to be the best informed on any topic of the day, so that with a lazily dropped-in word or two he could settle any controversy that arose. Nay, for that purpose he had a special body-servant, Petrucci, half valet, half physician, but above all gatherer of gossip about the families of distinction in any place to which his travels took him. There was no place of public entertainment or back door of a noble family along the shores of the Mediterranean that would not see the black locks of Petrucci if his master's yacht touched there.

So the Resident, Sir Neil Campbell, was minded to take advantage of the presence of the fast-sailing yacht to pay a quick visit to the mainland in order to consult some of his brother diplomats at Genoa and to send a courier with dispatches to Vienna. He was to leave in the early morning taking advantage of the dawn wind.

Another circumstance had increased Sir Neil's perturbation. Napoleon had that day given notice to all his servants at the palace. This might mean merely what he was reported to have said it meant. In lethargic despair of receiving his pittance from the French sovereign he was

cutting down his expenses and meant henceforth to dwell in his little private residence outside the town of Porto Ferrajo; or, fearing that an assassin might introduce himself into a large company of domestics, he was determined to reduce his staff to such as had served him all his life. Or it might mean that he was determined to absent himself from the island for good. If that was his determination the only place to which he could go was the continent of Europe. And there . . .

So the Resident had determined to avail himself of the hospitality of Mr. Smith. At the dance he had drawn Young Feilding into the large, mournful room in order to enjoin upon him that he should keep his eyes open during his, Sir Neil's, absence and, if necessary and possible, communicate to him anything he should observe that appeared a sign of Napoleon's determination to make a descent upon the mainland.

The young man had flown out indignantly. He was not a damned spy!

Sir Neil took snuff—a marvellous aid to those who in that era would appear reflective or shrewd.

“Young sir,” he said, “for three months you have been content to play what I will call counter-spy. That is to say that you have reported to me what Napoleon desired as to his habits, pursuits and designs. You have consented to be his tool, no doubt unwittingly. Now I suggest that wittingly you be of service to your country's representative and so to your country. Either that or report to your regiment.”

At that, hot rage overtook our young man and he remained tempestuous throughout that interview.



Was he to be miscalled, reprimanded like a child of twelve, haughtily and dryly admonished before the second demi-god of his acquaintance? For if Napoleon came first Mr. Assheton Smith was only less blindingly luminous. When Sir Neil had brought the milor into that dance when he had seen him incline his head before Madame Mère—and Princess Pauline and Madame de Frèjus standing in a group beneath a small dais—the young man's heart had stopped. It was amazing. Here in this remote island, under the roof of this dilapidated mock palace were gathered the two greatest potentates of the world—and himself!

Now he was being admonished before his hero, whose attire, manners, disdain, resources, horsemanship were the cynosure of the world of *ton*! He felt his features become coldly convulsed, his brows bend with rage. His foot tapped continuously. He was awaiting only an opening to deliver a challenge to a duel with Sir Neil.

Delightful relief came, however, to his troubled spirit with these words of Mr. Smith's.

"Sir," he said to Sir Neil, "I think you are unreasonably hard on this young man, the son of our old friend. You take advantage of the fact that you were present at his christening to address him as if you were his godfather and he still an infant. For myself I had not the honour to be present at his christening, being upon Hounslow Heath at an encounter of bruisers whose names I have forgotten. But I sent a mug . . . I sent a mug . . .

He wavered a moment in his speech. A silhouette, little obese, its head bowed, its step slow, its hands clasped behind the back, entered against the brilliant light with

out, and in the more dim illumination of that large hall became visible as Napoleon—truly in the green coat of Marengo. He did not however approach them, they being deep within the room, and his head bowed so that he might very well not have seen them. He stopped before a couple against the far wall—a blue soldier and a young girl in a pink gown—and, having pinched the soldier's ear and just bobbed his head to the young woman—unfolded a scroll of paper and held it up before their eyes. He could be seen to smile and they to laugh.

It was not, however, for an Assheton Smith to interrupt his speech at a mere first sight of a Napoleon, and he continued:

"For myself I am willing to stand sponsor for the honour of this young man."

"Why," said Sir Neil, "for the matter of that so am I. It is his prudence of which I stand in fear. I wish he were back in England, or with his regiment wherever that may be."

"That I do not," Mr. Smith said with as much heat as he could permit himself to exhibit. "Mr. Feilding is not only an eldest son, he is an only one. Soldiering is no career for a man of parts. That as you know is my settled opinion, so talk to me no more of regiments and camps. They are good enough places for bastards of men of quality and for younger sons."

The Emperor was proceeding very slowly around the wall of the apartment. For the most part he was lost in reverie but every now and then he stopped to speak to one or another of the groups that, upon his entry, had ranged themselves around the walls, to dissolve again into groups



when he had passed. For, he having been reported to much engaged with the affairs of the island and the dismissal of his servants, this was his first appearance at the ball.

Mr. Assheton Smith addressed himself to the young man who was now bridling with pleasure but all unconscious of the Napoleonic progress since his back was towards the interior of the hall.

"Indeed," Mr. Smith said to him, "I marvel that your father should let you, his heir, embrace this low career."

"Why, sir," the young man said, "I desired to see life and worried my father. With all Europe in turmoil foreign travel was difficult except in arms."

"Well," Mr. Smith replied conciliatorily, "it was proper that you should see life, but it was distressing that you should see it in such low company as that of Wellington and his bullies in the Peninsular. Had I been your father I would not have let you. I would rather see you among the cullies in rat-pits and amongst the bruisers on Hounslow or Newmarket Heaths. Still, we will let bygones be bygones. You cannot say that I am stubborn. And to conclude: that you are of goodish birth I know and you appear to be a gallant and spirited cockerel. So I will say"—and he made a slight inclination to Sir Neil: "I am equally ready to be your sponsor as to honour or any other scrap you may get into in the course you are pursuing. Further I will make a bet with Sir Neil of a thousand pounds fifty that you will not be hanged—nor yet shot, which I believe, the penalty for military treachery."

Sir Neil said dryly:

"No, no, Mr. Smith, I do not bet against certainties

For it is certain that there is no scrape in the world out of which Mr. Assheton Smith could not rescue anyone he chose."

Mr. Smith exclaimed disdainfully:

"Handsomely said, Sir Neil. I imagine I can save whom I like—particularly if he should have offended that Wellington."

He stiffened slightly and then relaxed into an easy posture. Sir Neil stiffened and remained stiffly erect, momentarily readjusting the immense cocked hat that was beneath his armpit. Into the rush of the pleasurable confusion that had overwhelmed the young man came the singular physical sensation of a tweak on his ear.

He span round vigorously upon him who was for the time King of Elba. He was lowering his hand. His eagle eyes were half closed. There could be little doubt of his disorder. His features, always pallid, were of a dead white, his head drooped—even the stars upon his chest were tarnished. He acknowledged the salute of the British representative of his jailers with a minute sideways gesture and, under the eyes of the young man, lethargically unrolled a little cylinder of paper.

"Yet they say France does not call to me!" he said.

He was holding up a caricature all scarlets, garish blues, and raw yellows. It showed an immense pallid man in blue upon a scarlet ass staggering beside a French frontier post. The ass was labelled "A million foreign troops" and advanced over the corpse of a French soldier. . . . It was Louis XVIII upon the ass.

"Well, that is done with," he said in a numb voice. "Poor France must groan beneath her burden."

He acknowledged the presentation of Mr. Assheton Smith with a slight drawing back of his head and shot at him one piercing glance. Of what Assheton Smith thought you could not tell, he kept his features so expressionless. You could not tell, either—and that was more unusual—what he desired that you should think of him. His high features wore their usual mask of stern disdain and weariness of resignation.

With a gesture of the right hand as if in invitation to them to enter his Throne Room the King passed lethargically on, but before they could vent their opinions of the incident he was back again and more brisk. A slight shadow of authority even was in his tone as he said:

"Milor is the owner of the felucca-rigged yacht in the harbour—the *Pearl of the Seas*?"

"Sire," burst from the lips of the young Feilding: "Milor Assheton Smith is more than that. He is for all Europe the glass of fashion and the model for *ton*. There is no one who has not heard of him."

"That is why," Bonaparte said with some ceremony, "we desire to show solicitude for his yacht." He drooped for a moment and then, recovering himself, added: "The Algerine corsairs that were off Porto Ferrajo last week have reappeared. We take it that whilst Milor enjoys our hospitality his yacht is safe from their depredations."

The young man interpellated with enthusiasm:

"The Algerines when asked if they had designs against Elba, answered: 'Would your servants make war upon God?'"

Mr. Assheton Smith said:

"That answer proves them not the barbarians they are."

reputed. Your Majesty, it was a monstrous proper answer."

Napoleon said that the young gamecock exaggerated—it was "the Master of the World" that the Algerines had said. He added that in earlier days it would not have been that he did not offer the protection of frigates or line of battleships to guests leaving his ports.

Mr. Assheton Smith assured his Majesty that he need have no fear: there was no Salee rover nor no Christian schooner could approach the *Pearl of the Seas*.

The King of Elba looked keenly at Sir Neil Campbell: "You see," he said, "if we desired, as is alleged against us, a descent upon the mainland—a *coup de main* . . ." His tones faltered away.

"Your Majesty means that he could not do better than seize the *Pearl of the Seas* for the purpose," Sir Neil supplied.

The king said:

"Yes, yes . . . that perhaps. But we will do no outrage upon the British. We have nothing against the British. We have taken the embargo off the yacht."

He recovered himself suddenly as if he had said: "Where was I?" and addressed Mr. Assheton Smith with an almost rustic bonhomie.

"Milor," he said, "I had almost forgotten my purpose, which is that my sister Pauline begs you to inspect—as Europe's *arbiter elegantiarum*—a *contre-danse*, a rustic Corsican thing that she will dance in a few minutes with the Baron de Frèjus."

He added to Sir Neil:

"They say the good baron is a renegade Austrian. His

dancing should prove to you at least that he is a good Corsican . . . Milor shall judge. . . . But indeed why should I show favour to an Austrian—whereas my benevolence to Corsicans is well known. And their fidelity to my person.”

Extending a hand again toward the Throne Room he passed on. Lethargy overtook him at the third step, the first two being brisk. He stopped, however, to whisper a number of words in the ear of a shaggy-haired colonel in blue uniform—a well-known favourite of his, a Corsican indeed, a man with an immense black moustache and great swagger beneath his hussar’s mantle—Colonel Count dei Gatti di Vivario.

Sir Neil said anxiously to Mr. Assheton Smith, the subject weighing upon his mind:

“Well . . . his lethargy! What say you to his lethargy? I attach great importance to your opinion. You know men.”

“Why,” the milor said with the air of a connoisseur, “I should say the lethargy was real—of a dropsical complexion or variety. . . . But, for great occasions, as we have just seen, he can draw himself out of his condition and act with sense and energy. . . . You might well still fear him if he were your enemy and a great occasion arose!”

Bonaparte beckoning to the British Resident to accompany him to the Throne Room, the boy was left to hear one hero comment upon the other as they followed slowly at a distance.

“Why,” said Mr. Smith, “he has a certain rustical air to him and his clothes are contemptible. . . . But there :

about him a *je ne sais quoi de . . . de . . .* gentility. . . . A flash of the eye; an erection of the spine when he comes out of his lethargies. That can only come from blood, so I can well believe that, as they say, he is the bastard of the Count de Marbœuf—a very great gentleman of the old days.”

The young Feilding said with awe:

“How can that be possible, sir?”

“Why, it is very possible,” the milor answered reasonably. “Monsieur le Comte was in Corte at the requisite season along with the parents of Bonaparte. And it was M. de Marbœuf who had, from the Marshal de Ségur, Bonaparte’s nomination to the military Academy at Brienne and, in spite of his insubordination, secured his promotion to the military school at Paris.” He added:

“Bonaparte was a most insubordinate and gloomy cadet.”

With even greater awe the young man said:

“Sir, you know everything!”

His interlocutor said reasonably:

“I know somewhat concerning most affairs of the day. You must not think that I pass all my time in devising the fashions. I choose to be well-informed and I am well-informed. I take steps to be.”

“Sir,” said the boy, can you tell me who is this Baron de Frèjus?”

“De Frèjus,” Assheton Smith answered, “appears to be an Austrian of the name of Masoche, though he has used many names and may be an Alsatian called Scheffauer. The King of Elba—so says my man Petrucci—chooses to style him Corsican so as to account for a certain intimacy



that he allows to Frèjus, whom he lately created Baron of that name. The King is usually kind to his fellow islanders. But this kindness is said to mask long negotiations as to great money transactions. . . . De Frèjus is an unsavoury scoundrel, as no doubt you know, but he is a financier that Récamier himself is said to fear. . . . Nay, he is said to have caused the bankruptcy upon which Madame Récamier was deserted by her lover the Prince of Prussia. The Prussian royal family are all mercenary knaves though the present Queen was once a beautiful woman."

He added:

"You find the Baron an exigent husband?"

The boy said:

"I find him an execrable scoundrel to be married to an angel."

"But jealous? Or complaisant?" the milor insisted curiously.

"Why sir," the boy answered, "at first he had the air of jealousy. I had introductions at Genoa to his lady, who was the daughter of my father's old intimate, the Marquis de Dinart-Périgord. And in Genoa it was difficult indeed to come near her. . . . Here all is different: we mix very freely and the Baron never says 'Nay'!

Mr. Assheton Smith said:

"Ah!"

"I put it down," the boy said, "to the difference in the quality in Genoa and in the King's court here. . . . But is it not infamous that the Marquis, her father, a most noble gentleman, should have permitted this greasy rascally creature to attain to the hand of one who is

miracle of grace, lightness and pink-and-white sensibility? . . . Why, sir, she might have been an English girl instead of a mademoiselle!"

Mr. Assheton Smith replied:

"Very likely! Very likely!" He tapped the lid of his snuff-box and began tentatively:

"Has it not perhaps occurred to you that the lady might in fact be your. . . ."

But at that moment he took snuff.

The boy was hot to know what could be said about the most beautiful of her sex and how she could be connected with his unworthy self.

But Assheton Smith turned the matter off as a mere passing thought—say, that the boy's father, Squire Feilding, might have aided the Dinard-Périgords, in the matter of her dowry so as to put her more on an equality with the fellow. A benevolent man, Squire Feilding! Not discerning enough to see that his protégée was of too fine a mould for that scoundrel . . . but kindly!

He broke off to add:

"I would have you not regard too earnestly such remarks of mine as may be mere surmises. When I am in the society of my equals in birth I permit myself to muse as I would not before the common herd."

Covered with blushes the boy stammered out his thanks to the milord. Mr. Smith continued:

"As for my surmises about the parentage of Bonaparte I think they may be correct. The love-child of a nobleman of before the Revolution would have more opportunities of early promotion than the mere child of a Corsican secretary to a governor's council. Bonaparte may

have fended for himself later, but his early promotions were rapid and surprising. A love-child is not infrequently more forward than a younger son, for a father will frequently do all he can to provide for the one whilst the other must fend for himself. . . . I do not say that he will deprive his heir of his rights, for that would be unnatural—but he will do his best. And very properly.”

They were progressing but slowly down the room, for the King, with the British Resident beside him, halted frequently to address one group of officers and ladies or another. The boy was all impatience for, in the next room were lights and Madame de Frèjus; nevertheless he was in ecstasy where he stood for he walked beside a Demi-God and was treated as an equal. Nay—as a confidant.

For Mr. Smith said suddenly:

“You could render me a service—that is to say you could gratify a curiosity that I have; thus: If a Frenchman—say a soldier—should ask you, using these words *‘Aimez-vous la violette?’* as who should say: ‘Do you like violets?’ will you be good enough to answer: not *‘Très bien’* or *‘Je ne les aime pas’*—but simply *‘Eh-bien’*—‘Oh well!’ with a pause between the words. . . . Will you then report to me what next your interlocutor says? For even Petrucci, my man, has not been able to tell me that.”

The boy said:

“Sir, I will do that carefully. It seems a very little thing to ask.”

“Why,” Mr. Smith said, “it is enough. For, if the next speech is as I think it may be, it will illuminate my reflections on whether or not Bonaparte intends a descen-

on the mainland. And I may add that it may exercise a singular influence on your own career."

"You suspect, sir," answered the boy, "that those speeches are as it were passwords between confederates?"

"Something of the sort," Mr. Smith said, "so that you may find yourself involved in a confederation. If you would rather not, do not do it."

He started:

"What is that terrible discord?" he exclaimed. They had paused to exchange the last speeches, so that the Emperor had entered the Throne Room and terribly loud music had at once brayed out.

The boy raised his voice to explain that they were the faithful blacks that the Princess Pauline had brought with her after ceasing to reign over Haiti—their strains mingling with those of the *cornemuse* or bagpipe native to the island of Corsica.

"Why no!" Mr. Smith said to his young companion. They had come so late into the room that the path that had opened through the press for Napoleon and Sir Neil had closed again and, not being able to reach the dais, they were content to look on from the wall. . . . "You do not need to be ashamed of your King's court. It is a very creditable affair for a fair-sized landowner as you must consider the King of Elba now to be. I could give a vastly finer rout-ball myself but I am far the richer man. It is about the show that King George used to provide when he was in *villeggiatura* at Weymouth. No more is needed for these worthy islanders."

The Throne Room was massed with the citizens and notables of the city of Porto Ferrajo, with veterans of : hundred victories, their wives, the daughters, sisters. . . The room was lit not only with sconces but chandeliers of dropped crystals. The music was singularly loud, the heat considerable.

"It is such a crush as is proper," Mr. Smith said. "It is the last dance of the island season—as it might be : tenants' ball. . . . Tell me which of the ladies upon the steps of the throne is your inamorata?"

Upon the platform of the dais were arranged three armchairs of red velvet with gilt woodwork. In the middle sat Napoleon, on his right Madame Letitia. The chair to his left was empty, for the Princess Pauline was dancing. Ladies in high-breasted dresses, all their hair be-wreathed and officers in several uniforms poured out before the throne down the steps of the dais or filled the platform around and behind it. Young Feilding's heart fell to zero : he missed the fair face, the graceful form, the cherry lips and sparkling eyes that his glance sought. He knew now that henceforth his eyes would not be contented with any scene that did not contain her. He said to himself:

"Without doubt this is the Grand Passion!"

His eyes roved over the visible females. It was impossible that his Héléne should be among the herd—yet his eyes went over the absurd female islanders who wore still—as if it were the height of the mode!—the fashions of the Directorate: the short skirts and short lanky hair, the bare arms and shoulders. His Héléne, he knew, was wearing, like her mistress Pauline, a big-bodied white

ress with a panel of flowers and sprigs on the skirt, a wreath of pink roses on her fine, fair hair, a fillet of pearls crossing the peak of her white brow, a veil of white gauze that floated with every graceful step of her adorable feet, and round her neck, depending over her lovely bosoms to the girdle at her waist, a string of great pearls.

He had sat so long, like Hercules amongst the virgins of Queen Omphale, that he had these toilet details by heart. They gave him a certain, as if sensuous, boyish delight. He had heard the Princess Pauline discuss with his *sœur* *Adèle* for half the afternoon what dress and what ornaments she should wear that evening. He was aware, for instance, that, if you have sprigs of myrtle upon a transparent skirt above a silk underskirt, the upper sprigs should diminish in size so as to diminish the appearance of the figure at the waist. But, though he saw her to the minutest detail with his mind's eye, she was not there. Only her darkly beautiful foil, the Princess, footed it in the open square of floor. . . . He had so lately trembled at a glance or a touch of the Princess Pauline that it disgusted him to see her run swiftly, skip gracefully, retire cocking upon herself; all this around—of all the human and grotesque monsters of the world!—the Baron de *Créjus*!

That oaf was attired in some outlandish uniform of someone's royal guard—reddish-purple velvet, gaudily lined with a hussar's tunic, with innumerable silver braidings, insets and frogs of bullion, an absurd, furred cloak of velvet over his shoulder. He sprang, heavily but with



barbarous alacrity, high-coloured with the heat, his dishevelled dark-chestnut locks tossing about, erecting his hands alternately above his head, stamping his high cos-sack boots and calling: "Ha!"

It was an harassing spectacle: nay, it was disgusting; for at one moment the Baron had his right arm around the Princess and swung her around and around, her delicious sandalled feet floating above the floor. She swung like that—a very Melpomene in the embrace of an abducting satyr—perfectly impassive, her oval face colourless and immobile as ivory, her dark eyes between their oval lids, gazing sideways at the floor, her face bound for the occasion with a very tight veil of black lace that went down under her chin and half concealed her frontal of gold set with enormous cabochon emeralds and rubies. . . . No doubt she hated the occasion, or so young Feilding hoped. And he had a mad impulse to snatch his Hélène from nothingness and nowhere and, whirling her into the centres of that floor, to go with her through all the motions of that dance—but with, ah, what enhanced grace and to what plaudits!

The aspiration was however impracticable, for, even had he known the steps of the dance, Madame de Frèjuse remained invisible. Was it possible that, disgusted with the spectacle of her husband, she had retired to some chamber apart and there awaited himself?

Mr. Smith was in the meanwhile pleased to commend the spectacle—even the negro musicians, the last relic of Julien's famous band that had diverted the court and fashion of Paris and Grenoble for some years now—and even he was pleased to condemn the player of the *corne-*

use or bagpipe who by means of a string and his foot operated some violent cymbals. They rolled their eyes—those negroes from Haiti—they clashed, jangled, blew into brass horns, sawed away at their double basses, wagging their heads from a gallery above the end of the room.

"Why," Mr. Smith said, "that music is very proper for a *contre-danse*, a country-dance or revel, where the province of music is to time the snapping foot. And this, as I have been pointing out, is by way of being a rustic revel attended by the lord of the manor. It would not do for a minuet and of course the fashion is on the wane. But I would have you observe that for the minuet Bonaparte has provided strings and wood-wind."

And indeed, in a smaller balcony set in the wall before them from which the King was accustomed to listen to the debates of his council, sat rather disconsolate white violinists, hautbois and bassoon players.

Hardly, with crashing repercussions, had the music ended when a man, creating a certain disorder in the crowd, came pushing out to them.

He was the Count dei Gatti di Vivario. In his blue Hussar's uniform, his dolman dragged half down from his shoulder by the crowd, he was recognizable as the officer whose ear Napoleon had whispered—a Corsican, loud-voiced swaggerer with immense moustaches that he would twist round his forefinger whilst speaking.

They stood back against the wall, a foot or so back of the crowd for they were tall enough to see over the heads aligned before them. In this space the Colonel took himself as if he had been a rooster re-arranging his

feathers. He placed in the crown of his cocked hat, as if it had been a salver, a triangularly folded note and held both towards the younger man.

Young Feilding's heart leapt in his side. The Colonel said truculently:

"From Madame la Baronne de Frèjus!"

. . . She commanded his presence. She had withdrawn from the dais and awaited him in the little ante-room in its rear. . . . There was no doubt of it.

"Dear Brother," the note ran, "before you commit yourself to any step I beseech you to speak with me. I have withdrawn by order of his Majesty from the dais and await you in the little ante-room. . . ."

"By order of his Majesty" dampened the matter a little. But his "sister, Hélène de F." awaited him.

He was running swiftly when the Colonel-Count stood before him twirling his great moustache.

"Monsieur le Lieutenant Feel-dang," he said, one hand now on his haunch in the hussar manner, "before you go you will permit me to put to you one question: *Aimez-vous la violette?*—Do you like the violet?"

Before his truculence and in the spring-torrents of his passion the boy was so surprised as to be about to say:

"No; damn violets." But he recovered himself sufficiently to remember the singular request of his great patron and to stutter at first: "*Eh!*" and then: "*Bien!*"

The Colonel started slightly back. Then he uttered, between his teeth, but distinctly:

"*Il reparaitra!* . . . It shall reappear."

And our young man could find nothing better to say than:

"I saw one upon this island today." For indeed, in a place sheltered from the east wind, he had that morning picked a white violet that he imagined at that moment to be within the corsage of his Hélène. There was nothing else to say.

But it appeared to be the wrong thing, for the hussar sprang back, touched the hilt of his sword and said:

"Monsieur le Lieutenant, you are a coward and an incompetent!"

Into the bewilderment of the young man—for he could find only the smallest cause for this insult—there came the calm words of Mr. Smith suggesting that they step into the next room. He answered:

"Sir, I must go to Madame Frèjus."

Mr. Smith said:

"I do not believe that you can have omitted to observe that you have an explanation on your hands."

Then they were in the more dim room they had lately left and the Colonel was saying to Mr. Smith:

"It will no doubt be unnecessary for me to spit in your compatriot's face."

"It will be completely unnecessary," Mr. Smith replied.

## CHAPTER TWO

**H**E could not come to his Hélène. Do what he would he could not come to his Hélène till she was gone from the ante-room and then he could not find her. Assheton Smith would not let him go in time. He said that affairs of honour must come before meetings with women: frequently the one precluded the necessity for the other.

"Indeed," said Mr. Smith dryly, "it is probably against this affair that your innamorata desired to warn you. As you are now in it there is no need for your warning. And I do not choose to let my principal go on the field shaken with painful interviews with the fair sex."

At another time the young man would have been in a fever of joy at the thought that this immortal duellist should choose to act as his second. Now he considered only that if his Hélène knew that he was involved in this singular affair she would—supposing her to share his feelings, of which he had no means of knowing—be suffering the direst tortures of apprehension. So that, when Assheton Smith asked him if he were a good swordsman, he answered almost indifferently that with the cavalry sabre he was pretty good, but with the duelling rapier only so-so. He did not care.

"We had better perhaps, then, choose the pistol," Mr. Smith said. "For as the insulted party we have the right to

choose our weapons. At least, I take it that we are the insulted party. That fellow was probably the *maître d'armes* of his regiment."

It seemed queer to the young man that his second should doubt that he was the insulted party, but of that Mr. Smith would not be certain.

"You do not know how susceptible these Frenchmen may or may not be about the violet," he said.

When the young man thought about the duel he felt numbed and stupid; it was only about Madame de Frèjus that he could excite himself. He said that for himself the affair seemed to present no mystery. That fellow—Mr. Smith was right in thinking that he had been a regimental fencing master—had been devastated with jealousy at being asked to hand him a billet from his Hélène. Naturally he was devoured by passion for that lady.

Mr. Smith said he might have it how he would, but since he, Assheton Smith, was responsible for the combat—he having made the young man give the inopportune answer—he was determined to bring him off as well as he might. So that, if it were conceded that they were the insulted party, he should elect for pistols.

The young man said it was all one to him. He had had some practice with the pistol in the Peninsular warfare, having fired a charge or two at French officers in scuffling encounters in ravines of the Pyrenees. On horseback. But he could not see how Mr. Smith could be held responsible for that fellow's unblest passion for Madame de Frèjus.

"As to that we shall see," Mr. Smith said. "The important point is that you should listen to my counsels, though I doubt if you are in any condition to do so."



The young man said that, confound it, she was adorable beyond belief. If Mr. Smith could see her eyes!

"It is to the matter of the eyes that I am trying to direct your attention," Mr. Smith said dryly. "When you stand before your opponent you will be astonished at the resolute hatred that will appear in his eyes. But you have to consider that in nine cases out of ten it is not superhuman resolution that your antagonist feels but merely intentness on his aim, and you yourself, aiming intently, will present as resolute and hateful an appearance. Have you not noticed that, when practising with foils with the buttons on, your opponent, through his mask, glares at you as if he would spring at your throat?"

He finished:

"Keep yourself cool then and remember that your *vis-à-vis* has no supernatural qualities."

The young man grumbled that he would be ten times more cool if he could have word with Madame de Frèjus and ascertain that she was interested in his fate. If she was not he cared not how he died, by sword or otherwise or how soon.

"We will, then, elect for pistols," Mr. Smith said. "These *maître d'armes*, though they be the very devil with the blade, pinking you where, to whatever depth, or in whatsoever posture you may choose, are frequently novices with the pistol at all, since they practise it much less. But here comes your adversary with his second. The plot thickens."

"They have certainly a mind to my death," the boy grumbled. "See whom the fellow has chosen for friend!

Yet, if you will but let me say farewell to the wife of that booby I will fight like a mad lion in a net!"

The Colonel-Count, who had rushed martially away to find a friend, was once again silhouetted in the doorway; they watched him from the depths of the room. He had beside him the flamboyant figure of de Frèjus, and as they advanced they gesticulated and laughed, making as it were passes with rapiers.

They achieved however a sort of ferocious gravity when they stood before Mr. Assheton Smith. The sight of the lady's unworthy husband had, too, aroused such a passion of dislike in the young man that he listened to the debate on the preliminaries with some attention—and wonder.

They were by that time in the garden, having gone out by a little door into a night, black but glorious with stars that shone through boughs of lemon and olive trees. The night was warm, still, and lightly perfumed. Before the dawn, with the wind off the sea, it would grow chilly, and the herald of day was already paling the lower stars.

Mr. Smith said curtly that he desired to take advantage of the tail of the dawn wind to get away from the harbour. He presumed that, as the insulted party, they had the right to choose weapons. They chose pistols.

The colonel exclaimed: "*Ma . . . no!*" but the Baron silenced him. He said with unctuous gravity to Mr. Smith that he was astonished that parties who had so gravely injured another party as was the case with the adversary of the Colonel-Count could make so bold and wrong a claim. He was invisible in the shade of the trees but his voice was strong, gay and buoyant. He claimed, with-

out fear of contradiction, the use of the duelling sword.

Mr. Smith reminded him that his principal had been called coward and an incompetent.

"But upon what provocation! To insult the violet to my friend is as a slap in the face. Worse: it is like an expectoration! We choose the duelling sword!"

Mr. Smith remained lost in a reverie for a second or so. They had been talking all in French; now the Colonel grumbled in the Baron's ear, in Italian, that if they used the pistol it would spoil everything. He could not undertake not to kill his opponent or he might be killed himself.

Italian the young Feilding understood passably, so, having said with hot rage in the same language to them that he was there to kill or be killed, he translated the Colonel's phrases to Mr. Smith, who had little or no Italian.

Mr. Smith was singularly slow to reply. At last he said:

"There will be too little light for swords, will there not? I may say that, if this young gentleman dies or even suffers notably in this rencontre, the survivors will have to endure my serious displeasure. . . . In short, I think you may find a corridor in the palace light enough for the employment of the pistols. For swords, you cannot!"

The Baron exclaimed:

"In the palace! Misericordia! Are you, milor, of a mind to have us all hanged? Are you not aware that the Emperor has issued a decree to that effect—that all who take part in duels shall die at the end of a rope? . . . I would have milor understand that all duels here take place upon shipboard—upon the frigate that lies in the harbour. This encounter must take place there. Otherwise

"I take my man from the field and report the occurrence to the Court of Honour!"

It amazed the young man that his patron and mentor should take this farrago seriously and with reflection. But so he did, for, after reflection, he said:

"It is of course grossly irregular that this matter should be debated before the principals. Let us walk aside, Baron. We can trust you gentlemen to keep your hands from each other's throats."

He could have trusted the younger man—for no sooner had the darkness and the olive trees swallowed their forms than he was in at the door and running across the long dim room. He was minded to cross the Throne Room and go in behind the dais.

Alas, there upon the dais, behind the chair of the Princess Pauline, stood young Madame de Frèjus, her face half hidden behind her tortoise-shell fan. Under its shelter she was talking gravely and deferentially to General Count Bertrand, her light curls mingling with his greying locks. Hop as he might on his feet, will as he might, cough as he might, the young man could not attract her attention. With despair in his heart he ran back through the dim room, the bright image still dazzling before his eyes.

The night was already pallid with the sudden oncoming of dawn in those waters, though it would be an hour yet. The olive trees were ghostly, the lemon foliage grey, the still grey waters suggested themselves behind the trunks. The Count was seated on a bench, his arms folded. Mr. Smith and his companion came gravely down from among the trees.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is arranged to our satisfaction. You will fight upon the maindeck of the King of Elba's frigate, being hidden from the quay by the mainsail. You will fight with cavalry sabres, with the employment of which you are both familiar."

They went down through the garden swiftly, and then with more gravity over the cobbles of the Place in front of the palace. Groups were already hurrying home from the dance, but their little company of four attracted no attention, there were so many soldiers busily in the streets. They wheeled handcarts filled with bundles or staggered beneath sacks through the narrow street. There was no doubt that from time to time one would call to the other:

"*Ohé! Il reparaitra!*" "He will appear again!" To which the other would reply:

"Yes, Corporal Violet!"

"I presume," the young man said to the milor beside him in a narrow descending street after one of those remarks had passed, "if I had replied: 'Yes, the Corporal Violet will reappear,' I should not be now in this affair."

"Why no," his interlocutor answered dryly. "If you had said that you would have been in it even deeper!"

"It is plainly," the boy said, "a code of the Bonapartists and heralds the re-conquest of France."

Mr. Smith placed a finger on his lips and whispered: "H'sh!" He added that some of the soldiers might understand English; if they did, that was no safe thing to say.

They came down to the edge of the enclosed harbour. Bonaparte's sole frigate rose above the quay, for that tideless and glassy water was almost level with the coping



stones. Men with baggage mounted a steep gangway and returned empty-handed. They said to one another they must soon give over for the dawn was almost there. They laughed and shouted: "Hurry! Hurry!"

It was a long affair, the preliminaries of this duel—for the decks of the *Inconstant* were littered with the baggage the soldiers had left. And, in the stillness of the coming dawn, the young man felt little emotion, it was so unreal. Assheton Smith told him that, should he fall, he himself would convey the news to his father, Squire Feilding, in Shropshire—and that gave the young man satisfaction. But who would tell his Hélène? Her husband, no doubt! He wished the duel could have been with Frèjus. Him, he—George Feilding—could no doubt kill. . . . But then, if he killed the husband, could he marry the widow? It had been done but was not favourably regarded. . . .

Apart from the clamour made by Gatti di Vivario and Frèjus in getting the deck of the ship cleared by a soldier or two and some ragged seamen, it grew stiller and stiller. Fishing boats with sterns as pointed as their bows barely muzzled at the quay; when a yard swung it was as if with a sigh in its sleep. There became gradually visible two, then three, larger vessels, one felucca-rigged, one schooner and a vessel hardly more than a brigantine. The *Inconstant* herself—though Corsican grandiloquence must call her a frigate—the *Inconstant* herself was no more than a small brig, too. Was it thinkable that Napoleon could contemplate the re-conquest of the world with a tartane, a schooner and two small brigs? It was unthinkable. Assheton Smith's beautiful white yacht that now showed plain, moored to a buoy in the middle of the still harbour, could



have taken all that squadron aboard, like boats on her decks.

A man—Captain la Sinse of the *Inconstant*, Feilding knew him well—was now making a terrific caterwauling on the deck. He came to the side and with extravagant gestures addressed George Feilding in his lingua franca. Feilding understood that he objected to such doings aboard his frigate. He had been awakened by the trampling over his head. He was in his shirt and trousers, the shirt open to the waist. He disappeared.

The young man grumbled to Assheton Smith that it grew cold. With this delay his muscles would become stiff whilst his opponent, hauling baggage about the deck, kept himself warm. Assheton Smith proposed that they walk to the end of the quay and back. On the deck of the brigantine were two field-guns. They were tarpaulined, like muffled animals, but there was no mistaking the line of their barrels, their upturned muzzles and their wheels. At the sight of them Assheton Smith took snuff ironically, but the young man asked hotly how they were to know that the guns were not coming rather than returning?

Assheton Smith said that if the King of Elba in truth meditated the conquest of Europe he, Assheton Smith, would give no little to make the journey with the King—in order to know how he acted and fared. Unfortunately he had engagements in the Mediterranean that would preclude his so doing. The boy said that he too would fain be of such an expedition; but he feared, from long conversations with the King, that there would be none and he asked his companion to observe the stillness of the town.

There was no doubt about the stillness of Porto Fer-

rajo. The high façades of the housefronts that now began to appear as the dawn-mists lifted, white-painted mostly but with here and there a lowest story painted blue or scarlet or orange—the high façades were completely destitute of humanity. Here and there a cat sat in a porch; a lean dog gnawed at garbage in a runnel. Assheton Smith said:

“Ah, but you shall see the activity into which it shall spring once Sir Neil is aboard my yacht and out there in the offing.” They were beginning to stir aboard the yacht. A man in white ducks with a scarlet stocking-cap emptied a bucket of ashes over the side. In an hour she was to sail away carrying the Demi-God and the British Resident towards Genoa. . . . In an hour he himself might be stretched on the deck of the *Inconstant*. But he did not believe it. His Hélène would be too inconsolable. Besides he believed in British coolness. These Corsicans were too excitable.

They had, indeed, an exhibition of Corsican excitability to fortify him the more, immediately afterwards. For, when they came to the plank that led down from the opening in the bulwarks to the dock, they were all but knocked down by the captain of the *Inconstant* who, in a voluminous boat-cloak—for he could not have had time to dress himself—and an immense cocked hat of black felt with a cockade in the yellow-and-blue colours of the Island, descended the plank at a gallop, vociferating that he did not intend to be hanged as an accessory to this duel, and ran away, stumbling, like a great bat, over the cobbles of the quay. Those on the boat had by now so barricaded the near bulwarks of the ship with soldiers' sacks that you

could no longer see the deck from the quayside; but, from the deck, the barricade was only neck-high for a tall man and the Baron de Frèjus, coming to the side, shouted to the retreating captain: Where should they fight if not on the deck of a ship since it was forbidden under pain of the gallows to fight on terra firma? So at least the young Feilding interpreted his Corsico-Italian.

"Well, we had better fight or we shall be interrupted," Assheton Smith said, "That fellow will surely arouse the whole town and the provost marshal with them."

"I do not want to be interrupted," the boy exclaimed. "You cannot easily kill with the sabre except by a direct blow over the head and I think I can at least guard mine. And Madame de Frèjus may nurse me if I be flesh-wounded enough to keep my bed!"

"Then let us go aboard," Mr. Smith replied. "I hope they will lend me a boat-cloak for it grows woundily cold."

They duly provided him with that and a second's sabre. He wore a high, fawn-coloured beaver, all the others having large black tricorues. There was a military surgeon with a case of instruments beneath his arm—a paunchy, red-nosed fellow. He carried a lanthorn and there were two other lanthorns for the seconds—the Baron and Mr. Smith. There was hardly need for lanthorns: it was growing very light. Still their pink horn sides were agreeable in the chilly dawn.

The Baron grumbled that there was not much room. The seconds might be pinked by the sabres if the duelists moved freely. He announced himself no hero, but a financier—a high-cheekboned man, with dark-chest-

nut, curling hair and a bulldog jowl—of fifty-three or so. The dawn made him look older; still, he was upright in his carriage and heavy.

The Colonel-Count was stripping himself of his dolman; George Feilding was also undoing his many-buttoned tunic: the cold smote him on the chest-bone. Gatti di Vivario sneered that as he had no intention of moving his feet the Baron would be in no danger from *his* sabre, and that annoyed George Feilding. But they were indeed in a very small cock-pit, cleared between the main and the mizzenmast and walled in by the bales of sacking that the soldiers had very neatly dressed. The young man had never seen a duel though he had frequently speculated on how they were conducted. Certainly he had expected more parade, the seconds walking at a distance, talking gravely, removing their hats from time to time to each other. But this was a queer affair. He could not get away from a sense of unreality. The slight metallic, wheezing sound that the sabres made, when, having measured them the one on the other, the Baron and Mr. Assheton Smith drew them again apart, was the most real thing about it—and the feel of the heavy hilt in his hand. But that was familiar enough. You had in the cavalry to have some acquaintance with the sabre if only that you might not cut off your horse's ear. He had done that once and afterwards had been so ashamed that he had at least taken trouble with his sword drill.

The Colonel-Count had a singularly dirty shirt to have emerged from his gorgeous jacket but he saluted with a much greater sweep of the sabre. Then Mr. Smith or the

other—for he was too intently watching Gatti di Vivario to know who spoke—a voice then said peremptorily: “*Laissez aller!*” and he to himself: “By Jove, I’m in for it!”

The feel of the other’s blade on his affected him as if it had been the watching of a cat—a questioning, peering contact. He affected a little pressure with his own blade. The fellow had a wrist of steel. Pressing his blade was like pressing the side of the ship. From a glint in the eyes opposite he knew another sort of question was coming. His own wrist automatically swung round and down; steel clanged. His opponent had flicked at about his own knee-cap, perhaps no more than a feint. . . .

Two dirty Frenchmen and a Portugee—  
One jolly Briton can lick them all three!

George Feilding tried a cut at the other’s shoulder; his wrist came round well—but the other’s metal duly stopped his blade. It would, of course. He would have no chance with a fencing master. Still

A raw recruit might chance to shoot  
Great General Bonaparte. . . .

They were back where they started. The fellow’s eyes were like black tarns fringed with black rushes. They were immense and intent, but there was a curve round the corners of his lips. You must not look at his lips, you must look at the eyes! What the devil’s right had the fellow to snigger when he was fighting with an Englishman? It was true that he did not move his feet—keeping them like the matador in the bull-ring George had seen in San Juan de Luz where Wellington had had his hounds. . . .



Perhaps he, George Feilding, would never ride to hounds again! . . . But the fellow should be made to move. He should be made . . . to . . . move! George was slogging away between each intake of the breath. The fellow's blade was always there: then it whickered above George's head, shimmering in the lanthorn-light. Well, he too was there!

He wanted to ride to hounds again. He wanted to give his Hélène a lead in the Six Mile Bottom country. She had ridden to hounds in England in her young years. On his father's mounts, of course. . . . Blows the delivery of which took the breath clean out of his lungs the fellow batted back as if you were throwing peas at him. . . . He presumably, too, loved George's Hélène. But could such a blackamoor love? There was however no other conceivable reason for their being there. . . .

He began to pride himself on doing well. If he had not touched the fellow at any rate the fellow had not touched him. Ha! . . . The fellow's moustache had jumped. . . . An immense weight on the wrist! An insupportable weight! A clang; a reiterated clanging and thumping. His sabre lay beside the other fellow's foot, the brass adornments of the hilt gleaming dully in the dawn. Assheton Smith was coolly between them, his second's sabre extended. The Baron de Frèjus and the doctor were slipping down from the bales on which they had taken refuge. . . . Now, how his fingers on the inner side were grazed with the hilt's tearing itself from his grasp! Assheton Smith was offering him a handkerchief. His brows streamed and his eyes began to smart with the sweat in them. . . . The other fellow at least had too to wipe his forehead with a



handkerchief of the Baron's. He leant on his blade. He was grumbling to the Baron. . . . Grumbling! Bad-temperedly! Then he was annoyed . . . at his, George's prowess!

Assheton Smith said nothing to George, but when he had examined both the combatants' weapons again he said with all the calm in the world to the Baron: "They had better start again before they grow cold!"

George now was raging. He had caught a grin and a wave of the hand from his opponent to the Baron and the doctor. He was despised by this braggadocious, ragged beggar. No doubt with similar terms and gestures he would subsequently describe the encounter to Hélène . . . He, George, was fighting for her. . . . You can but risk all!

He risked all. Even a cavalry subaltern, though not a duellist, knows that you should not expose to a former *maître d'armes* of a French regiment-of-the-line's sabre your whole knee, hip, thigh, side, chest and head itself whilst you hack with a really too heavy and ill-balanced sabre, even with all the passion of your body to back it. But he did it. And at that very moment the dark eyes looked aside. There was shouting from the quayside. Imperious shouting!

Of course a *maître d'armes* can afford to look aside whilst a novice hacks at his head, but apparently he cannot afford to be distracted by shouting. His wrist slackened in the slightest and as the young man rose to his fullest height, chopping ponderously down, the Corsican's blade did not altogether withstand the impact and with the grunt of his effort the young man rejoiced sharply.

and in wonder at the arrest of his sword-blade not only by metal but by a softer body. He had borne down his opponent's guard and the flat of his own blade had struck, like a blunt ax on the Colonel-Count's bare shoulder. He dropped his point uncertainly; he was elated rather than proud and he was uncertain what to do. The Corsican, his face full of amazement or incredulity, or maybe of pain, was staggering, though he still held his sabre before him. He had undoubtedly moved his feet. The doctor was slipping down from the bales.

The young man was as puzzled as elated. From the fact that neither his patron nor the Baron came forward to strike up their swords he could not imagine that either the duel or the bout was ended; therefore he must keep his eyes upon his opponent's blade, but at the same time he could not bring himself to use his sabre on an opponent in that condition. But caution could not hold and he glanced over his shoulder for advice.

There came round the piled bales on the inner side of the ship the tall, lean, dry form of Count Bertrand whom he very well knew—in an undress blue uniform and with a dry expression on his thin, enthusiast's face. He bent upon the boy, to whom he was usually cordial and indulgent, an expression of the deepest reproach, exclaiming: "*Laissez tomber vos épées. . . .* Let fall your swords. You are my prisoners."

There came behind the Count two subalterns, one his halloper, and the captain of the *Inconstant* whose dark and hairy face expressed joy and malignity. He exclaimed incessantly: "Aha! See you! Aha! See you!"

Well, the Count Gatti di Vivario was to go to his quar-

ters under arrest, and he went, bending not very hostile glances on the young man. He said:

"You may thank God and St. Remigerius that you are alive! You are the first man that has touched me in twenty years. Since I was a recruit. And you know very well too what distraction it was owed. If Count Bertrand had not a voice like twelve peahens calling from the quay you never had done it!"

He was swinging his dolman around him jauntily enough but he could not get into his tunic which one of the subalterns held for him.

George Feilding called to him as he went away:

"Well, you will tell Madame de Frèjus how I pinked you!" And then he wished he had not been so high-spirited, for after all the Count was his rival and one should be *galant-homme*. The Count paused, looking back over the bales through which a passage led to the gang-plank.

"I will tell her," he said, "that you delivered to me a kick with the strength and the address of a prize ox!" But he came quickly back with a hand extended from under his dolman and said:

"There, let the scarlet of mortification die from your cheeks. I will tell her that you behaved with great gallantry before the finest swordsman in the French Empire and that in danger she might well rely on your good arm. For how were you to know that before her tears I swore that not a stitch of your clothing should be disturbed by my blade!"

Then he went, followed by the subaltern.

There was much too much for that young man to think

of and no one was more aware of it than that young man himself. In spite of the grave face of Count Bertrand he could not imagine that this was a very grave affair. He did not suppose, for instance, that they would hang him. Still he was aware that military discipline was a strict thing and there he was undoubtedly under arrest. The Count Bertrand stood regarding him whilst he buttoned up the innumerable buttons of his tunic; the Count's galloper, a boy called Gonart—Jobart—some such name, held his, George Feilding's, dress sword which he had removed from his pipe-clayed belt.

He desired to consult with Assheton Smith—but both Assheton Smith and the Baron had vanished. That was natural: seconds are as implicated as principals where prohibited affairs of honour are concerned. He could figure his patron and the Baron tiptoeing away round one bastion of bales whilst Count Bertrand and his forces entered round the other. Assheton Smith would not want to be detained upon the Island over a tiresome affair—though he could hardly imagine even its one Demi-God, the King of Elba, laying hands upon the glorious other. But where was Assheton Smith gone to? Into the fore-part of the brig? Below? Over the side? Ah . . .

Hooking up his stock collar he proceeded gingerly to the side, no one hindering him. There, barely moving on the water, fended off by the knuckles of its white-dressed, scarlet stocking-nightcapped rowers, was his patron's white galley, from whose stern where they reclined on gold-corded, black satin cushions, looked up the milord and the Baron de Frèjus. He congratulated them on having got so nicely off.

"You would not expect to find me in an earth with both holes stopped!" Mr. Assheton Smith said coolly. "It would appear that my insatiable curiosity has got you into a scrape indeed." The boy said that, No, he was very content and interested. "Why," said Mr. Smith, "*Tua res agitur: volenti non fit injuria!* . . . but if you repent it jump for this boat. I warrant they will not take you."

Whistles sounded from aboard his yacht, seeming to awaken the day; the great curved yards swung round letting drop scarlet-tinted canvas gay across the sky; and another long, white boat, similar to the one that swayed gently beneath the young man's face, tore the mirror of the harbour with fast strokes of its many sweeps, the great blue, scarlet and white criss-crossed jack trailing at its stern and the huge black cocked hat over the stern sheets denoting that his Britannic Majesty's Representative was going aboard.

"Why, no," the young man exclaimed. "Damn it, no. I am in an adventure and I will stay in my adventure!" He would not for the world have left that island where, in the commonest justice, his Hélène must be admiring his prowess with the sabre.

The Baron de Frèjus, who had kept his eyes under his hat, gave a morose, sardonic look upwards at the young man's face. He spoke English well when he would for he had been in England many years; but he said in heavy French:

"I commend Madame de Frèjus to your respectful devotion. Remember that she is an orphan and your father's . . . ward . . . protégée . . . one might well say . . ."

Mr. Assheton Smith cut in:



"Non, non, M. le Baron. . . . *Is pater est quem nuptiæ demonstrant.* . . . You will leave it at that if you wish to please me!"

The Baron looked sulkily at the milor beside him and then sank his head so that his face no longer appeared to the young man.

"Why," the boy said to him, "you expected that I should present a ridiculous spectacle at the point of your *vombastes furioso*, though in truth he appears a good fellow. But you see I do not. . . . The Princess Pauline will lament the going of her dance-squire if indeed you be going. . . ." The Baron did not look up but below his hat prim his jaws worked.

"This fellow," Mr. Assheton Smith said in English, "is the man of affairs of . . . the Princess Pauline. . . ." He stressed the name. "He has obtained for the affairs of the Princess . . . Pauline . . . of the bankers of Genoa twelve million French livres. . . . And he goes again to see if—as I will put it—under my ægis—he may not obtain another twelve million. . . . So, as I think he well may, he is to some extent beholden to me. None the less I would not prick him too hard as I were you! . . ." He continued: "But you may perceive from the mention of these not inconsiderable sums that the . . . Princess Pauline has considerable—or let us say earth-shaking—affairs agate. . . ."

"The Princess Pauline," the boy said hotly, "is a mon-  
strously wealthy lady as she is one of the loveliest of her  
sex. She no doubt calls for money for her brother's im-  
provements in his kingdom."

"Twenty-four million livres for the improvements of



four square yards of rock!" the milor said. "Tut, tut! my good fellow!"—and when the boy asked hotly what he meant he gazed questioningly at the sky.

"Only," he answered, "that you will have a smooth sea tonight. If you are a good sailor you will escape sea-sickness." He cut in upon the boy's ejaculations of puzzlement with a business-like abruptness. He said that as soon as he found himself in Genoa he should go before the British vice-consul though he hated contact with these commercial diplomats. And he should depose to a formal *compte rendu* of this affair; how young George Feilding had fought creditably in an encounter with sabres, his opponent being a champion of the French Army; how he had been arrested and placed on parole by the military authorities of the King of Elba, and other things that he, Mr. Assheton Smith, Esq., had witnessed. And he should send one copy of that attestation to George Feilding's father, and one to the Colonel of the Monmouthshire Yeomanry, and one to the Commander-in-Chief at Whitehall, and one he should deliver to Sir Neil Campbell to be compared with the record in the archives of that island.

The young man thanked him warmly but hardly saw that he should have need of all this or all these copies.

"Why yes, you may," Mr. Assheton Smith said, "or my reading of the omens is awry. I should not wonder if in the troubles to come all those copies may not go astray. Then where should you be? . . ." He continued: "But that if the young man felt gratitude to him, well, knowing his, Mr. Assheton Smith's insatiable curiosity and desire for information, the young man could seriously oblige him by storing in his memory lively or important happenings

that he should observe and subsequently reporting them to Mr. Assheton Smith.

“For,” he finished, “if I mistake not you are this day going on—aye, and well forward among—the fields of such a fox-chase as Nimrod never described or I myself hardly ever gave the ‘Hark away . . . Hark for’ard!’ to. . . And the cry of hounds shall go from Muscovy to the bounds of Carthage. And further!”

## CHAPTER THREE

HE had been hoodwinked and made a fool of. That he realized watching Assheton Smith departing swiftly to the beautiful movement of oars. The milor, turning round in the stern-sheets, took off his beaver and waving it as if he were encouraging hounds, gave vent to such a musical "Go . . o . . ne away!" as the waters of Porto Ferrajo or the whole Mediterranean can never before or since have heard the like of. So the boy recognized that he had been tricked. The duel had been probably a sham one; his detention on that boat, for all he knew, was probably only a gesture too. But how far did the conspiracy go and who were in it?

He grinned. Anyhow Gatti di Vivario had got a con-founded sore arm out of it—and he himself was perfectly content to be where he was. He did not indeed ask any better. Parole or no parole he was going to see his Hélène by four o'clock that afternoon. If she had been dancing till six she would want till four to recover herself. But he would wait no longer, for who knew how long her accursed husband would be away? And the next thing was breakfast. How did you get breakfast here?

Round the corner of the bale-pile he found Count Bertrand gazing at a coil of ropes; in meditation; the captain of the ship and his galloper gazing at him. Awaiting his directions. The young man knew the attitudes of soldier-

officers who think out problems. They stand erect, their heads drooping, their subordinates looking up as if to a godhead. But he wanted his breakfast and he said so. When he was at ease about Madame de Frèjus he was a very cheerful young man.

The Count said abstractedly:

"You will put the 16th Regiment here, then, and the Fourth Cavalry on the brig. Yes . . . that!"

There were six-hundred-odd of soldiers of all arms in the army of the King of Elba, but they were divided into twenty regiments. Each had a skeleton headquarter staff—but each had feuds with several of the other regiments, so that billeting them about the town of Porto Ferrajo or elsewhere was no easy matter. The 16th Infantry and the Fourth Cavalry had a feud that dated from Borodino and was famous. They had smashed up the Street of St. Anthony between them on the night of the Réveillon de An. Few indeed of the inhabitants of the city would forget that San Sylvestro.

The young man said that he wanted his breakfast. He said to the captain and to the Count and to the aide-de-camp, calling him first Cornart and then Gobart, that he wanted his breakfast. The consideration of regimental feuds could wait, but he, he had been up all night and fought a fine duel. The Count Bertrand spat around at him, his cloak swinging finely out.

"You!" he said. "You do not need any breakfast. You are going to be hanged. Jump over the side and drown yourself!"

"You forget that I await your orders, General," the young man said with concern at the delay to his meal.

"Except that I am under arrest and may not leave this fishing smack I do not know how I stand. May I go to my apartment and get my man to give me breakfast?"

"You may not," the Count answered. "You are going to be hanged. Or at least if I were the Emperor I would have you hanged. By your clumsiness you have disabled the army's Quartermaster-General and I have to do his work. As if I had not work enough already!"

"Why, Madame Honorine cannot need you to hold her wool-skeins at this hour of the morning," the young man said; "but it is a very proper hour for breakfast for a man who has fought a duel. I was invited to fight a duell over violets. I am no brawler!"

The Count looked fixedly at the young man—for long enough to take snuff, though he took none.

"My Lieutenant," he said, "His Majesty is pleased to take one course with the details of which you are no doubt acquainted. But there are others—and those *plus royales* *istes que le roi*—amongst whom I number myself. And they think otherwise. For myself I will never indulge in any day-dreams as to your perfidious Albion, though his Majesty is pleased to. But for yourself you may think yourself fortunate that your throat is not cut. You personally are a pleasant sort of a boy and I have found it not difficult to be easy with you at his Majesty's demand. I do not see how you can have escaped from the perfidy that distinguishes all your countrymen. But you may have and I can very well see that it would embarrass his Majesty if at this juncture your throat should be cut or your head be stove in. So I warn you that in this affair there are very formidable men engaged, with their necks

in danger. Do not then—at any rate till sunset—engage in any unseemly levity upon this subject that engages all our hearts.”

A certain bewilderment mingled with the hunger of the young man. He was aware that occasionally the old moustachios of the army or even the civilians of the island had directed none too friendly glances in his direction, and now and then they would grumble as he passed. But he had laughed them down usually with his good-humour and some he knew he had won over by letting them talk of Jena or olive planting. And the will of the Emperor had imposed a certain cordiality towards himself and such other English as till lately had visited the Isle. So he said:

“Why, monsieur the Count, that is a plaguily long and mysterious discourse to address to a woundily hungry man. I would be glad if you would order me some breakfast. Then, after that, I will do all I can to please you.”

He added:

“I would not have you think me any Tom-Paine man or ragged Age-of-Reasoner. But I wish his Majesty, nevertheless, very sincerely well and I hope my country will prove of my advice. All the same it is unreasonable, if you have nets of enigmas all over the ground, not to expect my feet to stumble in them when I come across them!”

The Count continued to stare at him with his avid eyes, and his hunger grew. He had indeed an intolerable gnawing at his vitals and the harbour-morning appeared grey and disagreeable, though level saffron rays already fell upon the parti-coloured house-fronts. He added therefore querulously:

“I assure you that I know nothing of your plots. I see



not how I can have insulted any man by declaring that I have seen a violet upon this island. For even if the violet be the emblem of the person of His Majesty, no one is to be offended if I say that I have seen . . .”

“Young madman,” the Count said, “it is no question of who is or is not insulted. It is that certain men may think themselves endangered because you have any knowledge of that emblem at all, so I beg you will hold your tongue once for all upon the subject. . . . And I beg that you will keep yourself upon this vessel, for in the excitement that will this day prevail in the city of Porto Ferrajo I cannot answer for you, and His Majesty makes me answerable for you.”

“Sir,” the young man said, and it pleased him to observe what assurance the having fought a creditable duel gave him in talking with his elders. “I will stay upon this vessel—I give you my *parole*—if towards four o’clock my kinswoman, Madame de Frèjus, with or without Madame Pauline, will grace me with a call here. *They* may be able to interpret suitably to my comprehension these matters which I assure you, sir, you make almost Greek to me!”

“Faith of a Norman,” the Count exclaimed, but not ill-naturedly, “this madman will be chief eunuch of the Emperor’s hareem, now; bidding the ladies of honour walk now this way, now there! . . .” He called the captain of the vessel and bade him take Lieutenant Feilding below and give him some of the Emperor’s ham.

“Why,” the young man said, “I will have ham and some of that admirable potted meat they call I forget what. Yes! Paté de Grives! And oysters if they are to be

had. And hock-wine and seltzer which are admirable after a ball-night . . . and . . .”

The Count said:

“Captain la Sinse, you will give this officer what he shall desire of what the Emperor’s store affords. And afterwards you will tell the butcher to slaughter a fat beast. And you will see that he does not leave the ship. . . .”

The captain grumbled that Perducet who was aboard the ship could feed the young fellow, and that if he attempted to go ashore, he, Captain la Sinse, would with the greatest pleasure shoot him through the back the moment he put his foot upon the gang-plank.

“Why, no,” Count Bertrand said, “that is not what is desired of you. On the contrary, you will treat the Lieutenant as if he were the apple of your eye and particularly will you see that he is fed as if he were a multitude of gamecocks. Only, should he in absence of mind pursue a pretty petticoat on to the wharf, you will approach him and, with a proper salute, remind him that he has passed his word to General Count Bertrand that, for his own good, he will not leave the ship.”

The captain said he would rather have it the other way, but since those were the orders he would observe them, and so led the young man down to his cabin. The captain was a singularly be-tallowed person, his lank black locks communicating a layer of grease to his sea-cloak’s collar and to his shirt when he took the cloak off, so that his small cabin, with windows in the stern giving on a small gallery of flowers in pots and furnished with crimson utrecht velvet and gilt wood, was not quite what you would expect.

There was indeed a profusion of gilding and crowns that would have become a theatre, but such was the young man's hunger that he minded his surroundings very little. He was waited upon by an old, tired man, in his breeches and shirt, called Perducet or Perduca—a man that was somewhat of a huntsman and somewhat of a scullion about the court of Elba—and the plates were of very beautiful china figured with roses and the cipher N beneath a crown. A framed armorial bearing confronted him, beyond the table, up under the low ceiling but above the casement. It showed gilt bees crossing a blue ground; leaning against a corner of the window was a staff with a colour case, like a great rocket, but surmounted by an eagle in gilt bronze.

There was no doubt about it: he was in the lion's den and composedly consuming the lion's food. For Perducet tiredly informed him that if they gave the Emperor such *saldanza* and *lanha* as the boy there had served to him the Emperor would eat better and his health benefit. Perducet knew the Emperor's tastes, having observed him on expeditions in Corsica. Years ago, years and years ago. When Madame Mère had been a young woman and plump!

The young man had indeed been served on a great silver platter with a great many kinds of high-flavoured sausages, with hams and bacons of all manner of flavourings. . . . The boy ate; the old man maundered on: A partridge now and then, that they should serve to his Majesty. Shot by him, Perduca, in the Valley of the Lion, chosen by him—not too long hung, but sufficiently. They gave the Emperor nothing but chicken. Good for ladies but too tasteless. Let them make his mouth water and

his health would return. Give him the food of Corsica and the wine of Cap Corse. . . . This hock now—the young man was drinking hock and seltzer water at his own request. This hock now. Pah, it tasted as if you had vomited and was only good for horses. Let the Emperor give it to his charger after a hard day, but himself drink the wine of Cap Corse! Good stuff. With body in it. Promising restoration to the weary.

The young man now became aware that he was weary. That is to say that he was sleepy, for but for the overpowering inclination to close his eyes he was in spirits to fight a score more duels. For he was of an age to get elation from the thought that here he was at an imperial table, eating off imperial vessels imperial viands. It is true that he had often sat at the King's board, but that was different. There he had taken what was served him; here he commanded.

"In truth I am like a worm in a walnut shell!" he laughed at himself. And that was the last thing that he really remembered except that Perducet—or Perduca—was asking him familiarly, with a sort of awe, why his countrymen were such villains, so continually tracking his Majesty who was the soul of goodness. It was something fascinating and terrifying—as if they defied God—nose Goddams!

But the young man, urged by an irresistible force, staggered between table and couch, to fall upon the latter. He had barely time to grumble at the Emperor for having such coarse velvet to cover his sofa bolsters. It pricked his cheek. He was being covered with a cloak by the old fellow. . . . The Lion's fell. . . . He lay in the

Lion's bed, covered with the Lion's skin. . . . Hercules!

He was awakened by news that Madame de Frèjus awaited him on the quay.

When he confronted her from the ship's side, she being below him on the quay, she was moody. She was undoubtedly moody. A trumpet too sounded from the mouth of an alley that led up into the town. It was at first difficult to make himself heard. She was in pink, thrusting the ferrule of her parasol into the interstices of the great stones of the quay. He imagined that she was moody because some detail of his uniform was awry. But he had no mirror. He was still confused with the haste he had made—wrenching at his tight collar; his sabretasche getting between his shins; his shako wrong side to the fore! Dabbing at his rebellious hair with his heavy fingers. This was tragedy. Or she was moody with him because he had made her wait. Tragedy! Crime! He had made her wait!

Bugles, trumpets, drums, cymbals—all the infernal military dins of which Hell itself could be capable drowned his apologies to her, nor, though her serious lips moved, could he catch a word. She knew he liked her less well in pink than any other colour. That then indicated displeasure—and eternal despair! You do not greet the victor of a martial combat waged in your honour with a dress of non-favourite hue without you mean to dismiss him in favour of a rival. He had told her that he liked her less in pink. Or perhaps he had not told her. It was maddening not to know whether he had or had not. He remembered that he had not, at one time, cared—dared—that he could not bear—to tell her that he liked her less in anything. It might have been taken to mean . . . She was speak-



ing. . . . He went out of his mind in the effort to hear her. He thought he caught the word "ingratitude."

How in the world had he shown ingratitude? How? How? Had she a passion for the Colonel-Count? Then let him die—him, George Feilding.

Soldiers with every type of martial noise were debouching from every horrible alley of that hateful town. Marching to surround a staging in the centre of the quay—but nearer the ships! In addition men were now shouting. Well—they had to shout orders if they wanted to get troops into position. But why the devil should they want to form a square round that hustings? It was not election time!

With a white-gloved hand she was beckoning him to come down to her. That was horrible. He really screamed the word "parole" and waved his hands towards the gang-blank, the mast-head, the deck! He could not make her hear the word so he must have the air of refusing her society. . . . She could not know that he was on parole or she would never ask him to leave the ship. She was the soul of honour: she could appreciate what soldier's honour was because she was of a soldierly family. That is to say her father was a marquis and so presumably soldierly. He was in this horrible dilemma—to wit, either his lady was dishonourable or she would not have him ignore his parole. Or else she did not know he was on parole and must regard him as a coarse oaf that refused her invitation to come to her side! Was ever man so placed? In all the history of the world and of unhappy lovers, surely never!

The trained military—even the eye so little trained as that of George Feilding—which had seen but two and a



half years or so of rather irregular warfare in the defiles of Spanish mountains and a little more during Wellington's march on Bordeaux—the trained military eye will take in details of movements all unconsciously, be the mind itself never so much in agony. Thus, dancing from foot to foot, like a cat on hot bricks, on top of the bulwarks where he held himself erect by a rope stay and agonizedly shouted words that he knew to be inaudible to a young woman in a short pink dress with pink cross-gartering from her delicious little shoes upwards—a young woman who made every motion to walk away—George Feilding could not but take in the evolutions of small bodies of troops on the stones of the harbour. He looked, naturally, straight and beseechingly at the pink dress, but the corners of his eyes told him that never had he witnessed—and perhaps never again would he witness—such rapid evolutions of cubed humanity. Mostly bearskinned, though there were also the shakos of hussars, the brass, horsehair-tailed and tufted helmets of cuirassiers—the columns of men swung into place as if they had been propelled by catapults; they halted as if checked violently by the sight of disasters; their small arms came down as if hurled simultaneously to the cobbles from great heights. And he had never heard the strains of the *Marseillaise* in the open, with all brass and all drums. As a soldier he should have stood gazing, drinking in the martial sight. For there could be no doubt about it: Napoleon himself was reviewing his veteran troops of all arms: there were his white breeches, his green old cut-away tunic of Marengo. On the hustings!

But suddenly mental deliverance seemed to come to the

young man. He perceived that he could come at least nearer than he was to that young woman without breaking the letter of his parole. And, signalling violently to her to await him, he ran around the bales packed on the deck and down the gang-plank. But only to the end of the plank. Whereas, she remained at the little distance to which she had withdrawn!

Looking over her shoulder she continued to insert the point of her parasol into the interstices of the stones of the quay. He stood, stretching out his arms. She might, he desperately feared, take herself even further off. But deliverance came at the sound of a hoarse shout from behind him. On the summit of that slightly descending plank, his hair now plaited into a pigtail, his hat varnished, broad-brimmed and buckled, was Captain la Sinse, wearing at his side a great cutlass and nursing in his arms, across him as if it had been a metal baby, an immense-mouthed horse-pistol. He roared hoarsely to the young man to take no step further.

At the sight Madame de Frèjus came swiftly back to them, carrying the parasol across her at the extent of her arms and bending the stick in the extremity of her emotion. For there was no doubting her anger. She was right over against them and though her southern voice was soft her words could be heard without mistake. She said to the young man in English:

"If ingratitude was not in my eyes the gravest of sins, I assure you that I should leave you to your deserts," and to the Captain in French:

"Captain la Sinse, enough of this child's make-believe. This young gentleman shall take a walk with me!"

The deepest dismay possible did then overtake that young man. He could not imagine that so much anger could be displayed over a mere disorder in his scarlet uniform. He was not even certain that his uniform was disordered. On the other hand how could thoughts on ingratitude be introduced into this matter? As far as he knew Madame de Frèjus owed gratitude to none but the Emperor. He owed gratitude . . . well, to the parents that had borne him. And of course to the Emperor and Mr. Assheton Smith. But how could they come into the matter?

His heart stopped.

She was telling Captain la Sinse that she had not a minute to waste. In the state of turmoil in which the Court then found itself she could not be spared from the side of the Princess Pauline. . . . Then she had no more than a minute to spare, for him, George . . . the shortest of intervals!

She was bidding Captain la Sinse throw away his pistol. She neither knew nor cared whether the young officer had given his parole to remain on that vessel. He must come off it at her bidding or never see her again.

She cared then nothing about the honour of the soldier! . . . She beckoned him imperiously with her hand and moved away. His legs compelled him to follow her.

The captain also followed them, quite close, protesting. He had the Emperor's express orders; he was still half-minded to shoot the young fellow. She inserted a hand under his elbow, took from him his horse-pistol and tossed it over the bulwark of the ship so that it thumped hollowly on the wooden deck. She tapped the piratical-looking

coundrel on the chest with the ring that topped the handle of her parasol.

"The Emperor has since given other orders," she said. "I give other orders. . . . Go away. . . . I will make the Princess Pauline degrade you. You know I have the power. So, back to your lair, pirate!"

He recoiled, mumbling; then he climbed the plank.

The young man followed her when she moved shoreward from the ship. Her brown eyes regarded him, full of trouble; her lips that usually curled upwards in laughter were now depressed. The young man felt that his breathing turned to sighs. She said:

"We need not go more than a ship's length from the ship to walk up and down. I could not sit still. You are said to be confined here for fear of possible assaults. No one will assault you here for there is no one. Why did you not come to me last night?"

He burst into incoherent protestations. That then was the reason for her displeasure. But if she cared enough to be displeased at his missing an assignation then there was hope. She said:

"No, no, it is not displeasure. It is simply grief. Because you are not on the milor's yacht and half-way to Genoa."

He exclaimed: "Oh Heavens! Would you exile me from . . ."

She said:

"There, be quiet. I cannot be spared more than a few minutes from my mistress's presence. They are superintending the stowing of the Emperor's chattels. I am needed."

He was prepared to dilate on his own needs but she

exclaimed with singular emotion: "Listen, listen, listen!" as if she had indeed a flood of speech of which to unburden herself. And indeed she had. He had known before that she was timorous but she revealed herself as now so fearful that it made him feel monstrous protective and strong.

It appeared, naturally, that there was more in all this than met the eye—and, for the matter of that, it appeared that he, George Feilding was an extremely desirable person. That is to say that the King of Elba desired his presence on the expedition that he was about to make. And when George Feilding asked what expedition that was, she said that the Emperor was about to set out on the reconquest of France. Of the world maybe, though he said that that was not his aim.

There had been enough signs in all conscience to make this no very astonishing news, nevertheless his pulse beat sharply to hear it and he went on to exult.

"Why, that is glorious news," he cried. "The King shall enjoy his own again, as the song says, and I shall be of the party!"

"I have tried to prevent it," she said with agitation. "I have tried in every way I could to prevent your going. I declare solemnly that I have left no stone unturned." . . . Short of treason to the Emperor!

She had indeed bearded the Emperor himself and the Emperor had showed himself benevolent but obstinate and, as she thought, hopelessly wrong. They discussed these matters before her as if at a family party—or many of them. And indeed what else could they do, seeing that her financier-husband was mainly instrumental in raising

the livres on which the Expedition was at first to depend for its expenses?

"It appears," the young man said, "that he is to raise twelve million more with the help of Mr. Assheton Smith!"

"Ah, *that* man!" she exclaimed; "will nothing appease his vanity but to be a king-maker?"

He bade her remember that she was speaking of the greatest—the second greatest figure of their world.

"Ah," she said, "I have spoken with him. I did not know how deep he was in, but I have spoken to him. I begged him to remove you in his yacht before worse befall you. But he was deaf about it. Now he has got you into this hobble to satisfy his vain curiosity."

He said with what he thought was something like dignity:

"Hélène, how is this? Why should you thwart me in what must be my dearest wish? If the pillars of Hercules are to be rebuilt where should I, as a likely young man, be but at the rebuilding? Yet you would hinder it!"

She said: "Ah, the Pillars of Hercules!"

He exclaimed:

"You do not . . . you *can* not . . . doubt the success of this expedition. Why, all France will rise as one man in his support. Poland! Half Germany! Italy! The very stars in their courses will fight in favour of Freedom!" He added earnestly: "You must not . . . you can not doubt this."

"Ah," she replied, "you forget that you are the son of your father and how many commitments I have. On both sides. On every side. Yes, on every side the claims



of gratitude cry out on me and, since I cannot in duty hope for the success of all, what is there for me but to fear for you all?"

It appeared indeed, when he came to consider the matter, that hers was a troublesome position in the turn affairs were then taking. There was no doubt that his father in letting him make the Grand Tour so soon after the conclusion of the war had seriously enjoined on her that she should be his monitress and guide whilst he was in Genoa, at least, and the Italian neighbourhood; and it was true that his father had so many claims on the gratitude of her and her French family that they could not but take the injunction very seriously. And as a timorous woman she was perhaps not to be blamed if she feared that a bullet, say, might strike him in the course of one of the engagements he must witness.

"But ah . . ." she said, "it is not that. If you went on honourable and warlike service I might weep by day and offer night-long prayers, but I would never seek to keep you from it. . . . Whilst you fought in Spain I had many sleepless nights, for, though I hardly knew you, I was concerned for the feelings of your grey-haired father, my benefactor. But this is a far worse matter!"

With his superior military knowledge he laughed.

"Why, no," he said, "in the Peninsular there was some very perilous fighting. Obscure affairs in defiles. Without glorious names of engagements but with ambuscaded foes in forests at night. . . . This affair, if his Majesty chooses to take me on it, which I hope . . ."

She said: "George, you know nothing at all of it. Even if there were no fighting: if all France rises as one man."

or you, the son of your father, there will always be the danger . . .”

He laughed again: “No, no!” he said, “there will be no danger. . . . What danger?”

She said: “You are so improvident. . . . All you young men are so reckless. . . . There, there, so adventurous . . . so . . .”

“How would you have me?” he asked hotly. “This is an opportunity to go upon an adventure such as no young man ever . . . What would you have me do?”

It was as if she wrung her hands. Her eyes indeed were moist and starred.

“I do not know,” she said. “How can you ask me? I was in hopes your native sense . . .” She faltered and finally broke: “Heavens!” she rushed on, partly in deep grief, partly in petulant nervousness, for she was used to adulation and to commanding. “It is you that should counsel me as to where my duty and honour demand that my aspirations should lie. I could not see your neck running into a noose and not warn you. But from that to begging you not to do a thing that the Emperor thinks would be to his advantage . . . Though, knowing the nature of your countrymen, I cannot think it will be so. Or it may. . . . Not that I have not told his Majesty that I should beg you not to go with him. For I have so told him.”

He said that that had indeed been to beard the lion in his den and he took pleasure in thinking of that hen-barrow flying in the face of the King of the Beasts. But indeed she had never wanted for courage of that kind, for he remembered her flying at him with very

stinging words when, before then, he had seemed to want for enthusiasm for the genius of her Emperor.

She said: No, that had not been the case. His Majesty had been quite reasonable and gentle. His Majesty could understand matters of honour and shame. He could sympathize in the anxiety felt for an almost more than brother by an almost more than sister. He had been seated the night before by the hearth, warming his shins at a little fire—*flambée*—of thorns. He had said that she was reasonable. That the countrymen of her foster-brother might of course stigmatize him as a traitor. But he was inclined to think the reverse. Who now in the civilized world could any longer doubt his, the Emperor's, disinterestedness, his love for the arts of peace, his anxiety for the welfare of his beloved country, France? Who could doubt the sufferings that had been inflicted upon that miserable land by the grotesque and obese monster who had usurped his throne?

He had become enthusiastic; his eyes had lit up; he had made gestures with his right hand. . . . She had brought him gently back to the position of her charge, the young Feilding. It could hardly be doubted, seeing what the temper of the English ruling classes had always showed itself to be, that if that young man had the air of aiding the Emperor he would be regarded as in a treasonable situation and his whole career would be overshadowed.

The Emperor had said, No, that would disappear when his own entirely pacific intentions manifested themselves. He would appear as he was, the benevolent monarch—nay hardly so much the monarch as the elder brother and monitor—of his subjects, the patron of agriculture

and the arts, seated, as he then was, before his fire with his children re-united to him, around his knees. The King of Rome was grown a fine boy! He spoke continually of his father, so the Emperor was told.

She said that—purely for purposes of this discussion—let them say that Lord Castlereagh, the Duke of York, Lord Wellington and other members of the British Government took the view that, by quitting the Island of Elba and marching on the mainland, his Majesty committed a breach of the treaty that had consigned him to that island and was in open war against their kingdom. Then, if her brother aided his Majesty, must not those Lords condemn him as a traitor?

The Emperor asked with heat how it could be alleged that he had broken a treaty that had never been carried out and that had been breached by the conspiracies against his life, or for his kidnapping, of which the most ample proof existed. No man could be accused of breaches of treaties who acted merely in defence of his life from attacks made by the other parties to those treaties. Neither law nor morality nor the conscience of humanity could sustain such a view.

She said: "Ah but, your Majesty, there is, it must be admitted, that possibility. The English, as your Majesty well knows, are distinguished by no great powers of reasoning but by an unqualified and unprecedented stubbornness."

The Emperor interrupted to say that changes had taken place in England. The populace of that island laboured under injustices and oppressions such as made an imminent revolution almost inevitable. He was of opinion

that, should he land in England, an immense popularity would bear him in triumph as, she would soon see, he was about to be borne on the wings of his eagles to the capital of France. But still, said he, before her evident distress he could not but give some consideration to her pleas. And he asked her how it would content her if he appointed the young man a military attaché to his staff?

"Sire," she said, "your Majesty knows that a military attaché can only be appointed by the Government dispatching him."

He said, well, that was true. But he was determined to have a British witness, not only to the fact that he expressed during the whole of his coming expedition the utmost goodwill to Great Britain and her Allies, but also to the mildness and humanity with which his operations were to be conducted and the enthusiasm with which his return was greeted by his subjects. If he could have found any other British person to fulfil that purpose he would. But for the sake of her fears, have been contented. But there was no one else. He could hardly be expected to invite Sir Neil Campbell to accompany him.

The Princess Pauline coming into the room at that moment asked what subject was being there discussed. and when she was told exclaimed lightly:

"Oh la, the nice boy! I had rather you left him here with us. But if you are set on taking him with you and at the same time absolving him from the suspicion of collusion, you have only to take him prisoner and so to coerce him!"

The Emperor said: "No, no! I will do nothing to bring



that hornet's nest about my ears. The English are extraordinarily jealous as to the liberties of their subjects abroad. You had evidence of that after the Treaty of Amiens. Their ministry till then was so detested that, we had evidence, a revolution was contemplated rather than vote the expenses of a new war. But, on news that I had imprisoned a few civilians and travellers, that died away and all that their government asked for was granted. I have made mistakes in my time. I have frequently confessed to you, my chickens, that my whole policy in Spain was faulty in that it brought those insupportable islanders to an undislodgable position on my back. My mistakes I am always ready to acknowledge, but repeat them I never will."

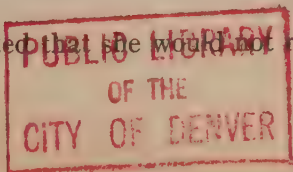
"Well, some stratagem can doubtless be found!" the Princess Pauline said, and came to get the benefit of the air, leaning on the mantel beside her brother and dropping petals from a red flower at her waist into the brands. Then she said: "Ah!" and, to Napoleon:

"Your Majesty lately signed a decree, and not before it was needed if any of your quarrelsome army was to remain whole. . . ."

She looked down upon the Baronne, who in her earnestness to have her will with the Emperor was upon her knees . . . the dark Princess looked down with her oval eyes and said:

"Little one, your presence is unnecessary here. Go and show your young friend the new jewel your husband has given you for the dance tonight! I wish I had such a husband!"

Hélène had protested that she would not rise from her





knees until the Emperor granted her permission to warn her foster-brother of the perils in which she considered him to stand. The Emperor leaned forward to pat her cheek and said:

"Why, do as you will, Madame la Baronne. It is no great matter. Rome will not fall for lack of a little cornet of cavalry. Still, I hope you will not succeed. Nor do I believe you will be listened to!" He had fallen back in his chair exhausted by this discussion, which followed on a long morning over papers that had begun at dawn and lasted until a half-hour ago.

The Colonel-Count dei Gatti di Vivario, she told the young man—as he very well knew had always been a sort of Orson-fetch-and-carry for herself and the Princess—a shaggy, faithful, spirited Highland retainer such as you might read of in the works of the Wizard of the North. So it was natural for her to give him for delivery the note that he had carried to George Feilding. She might have spared herself temporary anxiety if she had not, for led on by melodramatic snorts, starts, rollings of the black eyes and grunts, she pressed that amiable scoundrel until he admitted that the Princess Pauline had directed him to challenge the young man to a duel so that he might be kept under parole at any rate until the Emperor reached Paris.

The stratagem was not without its ingenuity. The claims of an affair of honour were the only tie that the young man would be totally unable to ignore; the law against duelling in the case of so small a force as was at

the Emperor's disposal was perfectly reasonable and at the same time circumstances of hurry such as surrounded at that time the Emperor and his superior officers might very legitimately be advanced as a reason for not trying the young man and his opponent until the whole Expedition found itself at leisure in the Capital. The young man if questioned as to his loyalty could perfectly truthfully assert that he could not avoid fighting a duel without such stain on his honour as officers of His Majesty's Army could not endure; the Emperor's ministers if accused of kidnapping a British officer, or if it were asserted that the kidnapping of a British officer was a *casus belli*, could perfectly truthfully assert that no state could endure the careless ignoring of a statute that was absolutely necessary to the very existence of its armed forces. The army of Elba did not contain more than ten field officers and that the life of one of their most important organizers could with impunity be threatened was not to be imagined. At the same time, so anxious was the King that the affair should have no hole-and-corner appearance that he was unwilling that the trial for a serious offence should take place in an obscure town at the confines of the world; he preferred to give it the full publicity of a city where the offender could be certain of justice and the assistance of the most skilful lawyers. . . .

So there the duel had been, very carefully explained, accounted for and discounted, to the satisfaction of his Majesty and, as the Princess Pauline imagined, to the satisfaction of all reasonable beings. Or so said the Count.

But, in this matter Madame de Frèjus had to acknowledge herself outside the ranks of reasonable beings. . . .

And, walking up and down in a space of twenty yards or so, on the cobbles near the *Inconstant*, on a mild, sunny February afternoon, whilst, not so far away, small cubes of troops, to the sounds of trumpets and commands, threw themselves about the harbour around the hustings on which stood their lord and his Marshals, that beautiful young woman confessed that she had made the Colonel-Count a very nice little scene the night before. She had tried imploring, commanding, cajoling; she had tried with every feminine wile, getting on his soft side. For he had of course a soft side for her—only it did not go far enough in this particular instance.

She had called him into the little room behind the Throne whilst the dancing had been going on because, send what messengers she would to the young man during the day, he had not been to be found. As a matter of fact he had gone shooting partridges in the Valley of the Lion during the afternoon and, hearing at nightfall that Mr. Assheton Smith's yacht had come into the harbour, had had himself pulled out to her to call on her master. But Assheton Smith had gone to call on Sir Neil Campbell.

At any rate it had not been until the late evening and on the dais that she had seen the young man against the wall. She had then at once gone into the little ante-room where paper and pens were kept and had written him that note, calling to her the devoted Colonel-Count to deliver it for her. That faithful hero, too, it appeared,

had been seeking the young man throughout the afternoon and evening and, as he was shortsighted except sword in hand, it is possible that he might otherwise not have found him and the duel might not have taken place.

"Why," the young man said, "it is fortunate that you were the occasion of his finding me, for it has all fallen out very well!"

But: "No, no, no!" she cried. "It is not as I had wished it or wish it!"

"Nevertheless," he objected reasonably, "I have worsted this fencing-master under the eyes of Europe. If you are interested in me, tell me what could be more to the credit of any man than to have worsted a fencing-master under the eyes of Mr. Assheton Smith, which is the same as under those of Europe?"

She said, with some vexation:

"Well, you vanquished a man who was tied to my petticoat strings. For, on my going on my knees to him to spare you, he consented not to pink you in the forearm, that having been his earlier intention!"

He stood suddenly still, his cheeks became scarlet, he tapped with his boot-toe on the stones.

"I had rather you had let me be hanged," he said, controlling his words. "If it is gratitude to my father's son that lets him be a laughing stock . . . it is a strange tenderness."

"It is my woman's business to see that you are neither hanged nor yet pinked," she said.

"It is my man's business," he answered, "to see that my father's name is differently honoured. Did my opponent say that I did not fight with spirit?"

She put her hand on his fore-arm.

"Do not shake it off," she said. "It is at times a woman's duty to wound, by her precautions, those she loves. . . . He spoke very praisingly of you. . . . He praised your courage, your endurance, your enormous strength. . . . Well, he must, that, for his own credit. . . . He could not mightily laud your skill with the sabre. How could he? He said you had the creditable tricks of the British heavy cavalry!"

The young man grumbled between his teeth:

"Ask him how many of their damned cuirassiers' helmets we split in half at Ciudad Vimignione? Bid him ask Ney if himself was not there? It is not him they call *Le Beau Sabreur* who will mock at us Heavies. . . . Besides, Ney is a traitor to that King of yours. I have heard him say so many times!"

She began to say: "Brother, you mistake . . ." But they found that they were gazing into each other's eyes as if at the sudden sound of a great natural happening. Hitherto their voices had had to go now up, now down, or had had to wait altogether for the cessation of sound. But he was aware that his late outburst of rage had been to the sound of deep cheering from the crowd that was backed on the house-fronts. Now the one word: "*Soldiers!*" in the voice of their master seemed to fly between their faces. There had been no trumpet half so clear. You would have said those tones echoed from the very horizon as a brazen ball might rebound from a steel bowl-rim.

They had to hold their breaths—for a pause that seemed to last a whole age. The word presaged the con-



quering of the world; so one single thunder clap will foretell an all-overwhelming hurricane. Their private affairs must wait; their hearts must stand still. It is not every day that you will hear the Master of the World give out a new chapter-heading to the volume labelled History!

Napoleon stood, a little, still figure in an immense hat, waiting unimpressedly whilst the last ripples of enthusiasm died out of the ranks of his men and the serried disorder of the crowd. He appeared above a hedge of bearskins and long steel, motionless, all-seeing with his expressionless, as if resentful, eyes of the eagle. For the moment he was before all things the military master of men and it was a singular revelation for those young people who had known him hitherto rather as the gentlish, slightly somnolent head of an exiled family or the kindly father of a tiny country of olive trees and iron mines. There he stood with a voice that shook the heart in its beat and with a glance that threatened death for a man that moved inopportunely. You felt the soldiery say: We deliver our lives: you will waste none!

*"Soldiers! . . . Friends! . . . Old Comrades. . . . Here are your familiar eagles. . . ."*

And the eagles—the standards of so many regiments, each topped with a golden bird and held by a grenadier—the gay, scarlet, blue and white tints, made a fence behind him.

The inevitable brou-ha-ha of voices in applause swept away his words: they were a good fifty yards from him. The young man said to the young woman, his cheeks scarlet, his eyes flashing:



"You imagine he can fail. . . . Our Old Nosey says he alone is worth thirty thousand men. And he inspires each of his men to be worth a hundred! You have a hundred thousand men before you. I know troops. . . ."

The young woman's breath caught; her brown eyes sparkled, her cheeks were flushing. She exclaimed:

"Yes! No! He can't fail. . . . Hush! . . . . *He* cannot fail. But the solid globe can fall away and betray his feet. . . . Hush!"

The strong southern tones of the voice swept over them like a caress in a pause of the shouting. They found that they were holding hands; squeezing each their fingers tight at the ends of phrases.

*"These are the eagles that, flying from church-tower to church-tower of your countrysides, shall victoriously alight on the topless spires of Notre Dame of Paris. . . ."*

"Glorious! That's glorious!" the boy said. "The touch sublime!"

"Oh, is it not?" she asked. "Too sublime for this low world."

*"In the peace that shall lie where falls the shadow of their wings and surrounded by the hedge of your swords, the husbandman shall repose beneath his vines."* A tremendous burst of cheering, coming from the civilians aligned against the house-fronts, accompanied an eruption of hats and fans that they cast above their heads. *"And upon the surrounding nations, emulous of your conditions, shall descend the blessings of peace, freedom and democracy!"*

The young man asked: "Why should you cry? Your eyes are full of tears!"

She said: "I always cry over the softer emotions. They are so distant, so far from realization!"

"*Soldiers of the Grand Army!*" the King of Elba cried on, "*a million foreign troops wrested from you your standards, a deluge of foreign gold, a tempest of treachery set on the throne of your free choice the lethargic tyranny beneath which your fair land groans in its chains. But, behold, like the phœnix from amidst the fire of Arabian spices, your standards have again arisen. Soldiers of the Grand Army of France come, resume your eagles which your Emperor salutes with his lips!*"

They had come insensibly nearer and could plainly see the pallor of his face, the sphinx's smile that attended on his closed eyes whilst he took the standard from an ancient grenadier and set the eagle to his unsmiling lips.

"What does he think?" the young man asked. "What can a man think at a moment so glorious!"

"Come away," she said. "It is perhaps not safe for you here at this moment!"

A young, rigid ensign, in the bearskin of the Imperial Guard, had climbed the steps of the hustings. The King, in the deep silence, handed him his regiment's flag. When he dropped the point in a stiff salute to his right the bright tricolour draped the front of that platform, the silk rustling audibly.

"You shall die, but that you shall never surrender!" Napoleon said.

"Never, my Emperor," the boy said clearly. "Never while we have blood in our veins!"

The discipline of the lines which that consecration of bright-coloured silk had reduced to a silence like a holi-

ness, broke then. They cried: "*Vive l'Empereur! Vivent les aigles! Vive la Garde!*" and their bearskins and tricornes and shakos waved, like enormous black flowers on their bayonet points above all the heads of the square. The civilians too broke the cordon and came rushing and cheering and hat-throwing down over the cobbles. The cries were a continual undertone of sound; as each standard was delivered, wavering over their heads, great bursts like volleys of musketry followed. The doves of the town circled in great flights, madly round above their heads; the innumerable sea-gulls of the harbour discordantly screamed their misgivings.

She had got him to a distance, beside the *Inconstant* again, for she truly feared that, if not the soldiery, then at least some of the townsfolk might mob him in that moment of delirium. The English with their mournful and bitter persistence had been responsible for His downfall. How were they to know, being ignorant people, that once Napoleon had again erected his warlike eagles, they would not be truly serving him by making an end of one of those Islanders? They would only see that there would be one enemy the less.

"But they shall soon be undeceived!" the boy said. "It would be an unthinkable, an unspeakable thing if my country, after what I shall tell them . . ."

"Oh, George," she said. "What shall you tell them? Who will listen to you?"

He began to bubble, intending to tell her that he was the son of Squire Feilding of such and such a place with six pocket boroughs at his disposal, and the friend of Mr. Assheton Smith of Penrhyn who had sixteen, and

that, if he could not be listened to. . . . But before he could get a word out, she had exclaimed, with a hand on his arm:

"George, do you know Lord Liverpool? He has the soul of a flunkey and was Mr. Jenkinson! Or Lord Castlereagh? A soul that was wicked and damned at its birth! Or the Prince Regent? Who is wicked and cruel and vain! A fat, great, potato-souled, chestnut-wigged lard-bladder. . . ."

"And you?" he asked. "Do you know all these?"

She said: "Yes. My husband has banked for them as now he banks for the King of Elba!"

He exclaimed: "Banked! Banked! What is that?"

"It is," she said, "that they lick your boots, or, when dancing with your wife, praise the shade of her eyes."

"They have praised the colour of your eyes?" he asked with despair.

"Every one of those three, for from ten to sixty thousand pounds apiece. There was Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister, that Captain Bellingham shot in the House of Commons. . . . He owed my husband several thousand pounds with interest and principal. His admiration for my jewels was more than you could believe. Had he lived the world might have been different. But as a sign of the discontent that seethes in your country, they shot him. . . . So Mr. Jenkinson, the power behind the throne—a horrible man, Lord Liverpool!—is your Prime Minister. . . . And he is of another interest. . . . He is of the gang, with the Prince Regent that pulls the strings of Lord Cochrane. . . ."

"Why," the boy said, "you shall say nothing against Lord Cochrane."

"He is in the Tower for swindling with the funds!" the young woman said, "or was, by the latest advices."

"That is a calumny," the young man cried. "He is the most gallant frigate-commander that we have. The Cochranes—the Earl of Dundonald—and my mother's family are sib and rib!"

"He is a most gallant frigate commander," she answered. "But he should not have had so fast a yacht else he and Cochrane Johnston, who is his uncle and, I think, your mother's cousin, and Butt the stockbroker and Alexander McRae, the spirit merchant—or perhaps it is John Random that is the spirit merchant . . . But, if they had not had so fast a yacht they could not have come in before the government packet and so they had not rigged the market. . . ."

"I do not know how you know these things," the boy grumbled. "You appear, I swear, to be the gay soul of purity. But if you have danced with the Prince Regent and who knows whom . . . For me, I only know that when Cochrane was in this Mediterranean with his frigates the French dared not breathe on the waters!"

"You do not exact that I should love him the better for that," Madame de Frèjus said, a little dryly. "I am after all a Frenchwoman!"

He exclaimed hotly:

"No, no! You are no Froggy! It is true that you have the lightness of foot and the *je ne sais quoi* . . . But you were born in Kensington of the *ancien régime*. . . . Your heart and your love and honour are English. . . ."



"George," she said. "My brother! My love is engaged to the King of this Island and his kin; my honour should engage me, as well you know, to the King of France that now is, and no doubt to his Allies. . . . My heart . . . I do not know. It is yet to be engaged. . . . But my gratitude goes in duty to your father and to my husband. . . ."

He exclaimed: "To your husband! Oh heavens!"

"You are romantical," she said. "You mean that because my husband is thirty years older than I, I cannot show him gratitude for the favours he has bestowed upon me or to your father because he united me to my husband. . . . But gratitude does not go by age and if, instead of being the heir to broad acres, you had known the pinched, stiff, starving etiquette of my parents' hovel in Edwards square, with the Duke this and the Marquis that drawing words at cards over stakes of enough snuff to fill their pinchbeck boxes, you would look at things differently—supposing that afterwards you were permitted to live weighed down with jewels in great palaces amongst the select of several lands in the company of a man that pulled the whole world's strings! . . . how would you yourself feel toward the man who had given you all that?"

He groaned and then said: "I groan! You make me groan!"

She said: "You imply: 'What then becomes of the pets' Chloe and a cottage that your English young girls are encouraged to sing of, with belts of flowers and milkmaids' stools of spring mornings and dew?' But I doubt their hearts ever went with that, for I have heard them speak of 'establishments' and jointures and houses in



Berkeley Square. . . . And it horrifies you to think of my husband pulling the strings of the world. But so it is and you must adapt yourself to the world you live in. Don Quichotte died a number of centuries ago, so I believe."

"I do not know about that," the young man exclaimed. "But if you mean that your . . . that your egregious . . . in short that the Baron de Frèjus pulls, as you phrase it, the strings of that greatest commander the world has ever known . . ."

She flushed with anger and her eyes sparkled cruelly:

"It ill becomes you as your father's son to couple with my husband's name an injurious epithet, seeing that it was your father who made the match, I being the daughter of his oldest friend and of the best blood in France. . . . It is well said indeed how salt his bread who eats at another's board, and well may you and your countrymen be detested for your purse-proud airs and the corruption that by your gold you have caused in this age. Accursed, thrice accursed race of islanders that you are!"

Shaken and outraged, the young man exclaimed:

"Nevertheless we gave you hospitality—you and the emigrant nobility of your country!"

"Ah, but what hospitality!" she cried. "Such as you would be ashamed to offer to a poor relation, and you think that I, the governess maybe, am well married to the butler! . . . But how many of your curds-and-whey misses would not have given their heads to have danced, as by the grace and wit of my husband I have, with the Prince Regent beneath my own roof? Or with Prince Metternich, and Talleyrand himself. Or to converse

with the Tsar Alexander and your ramrod Duke . . .”

“Still,” he would not abandon his position, “it is a new sort of thing. I am willing to admit that by your beauty and birth and wit you have helped your husband into salons into which he would otherwise never have penetrated. Did I not see him dance last night with the Princess Pauline?”

“Ah, it is there the shoe pinches,” she said. “You could not have done it for all your broad acres or your spleen! Or your skill with the claymore, as the Wizard of the North calls it! . . . But in short I wish you were sailing now aboard Mr. Assheton Smith’s yacht. . . . Alas, that she should be so fast. Otherwise you would have been . . .”

“Hélène,” he said; “oh Hélène!”

“You may remember that I am la Baronne de Trèjus,” she said, “till you can think more civilly of him who procured that style for me!”

“Why, I am not able to think so well of him as all that,” he said. “How can I?”

“He dances too well with the Princess Pauline!” she said.

“No,” he said, “I do not think that he danced so well. I did not like his dancing. But if he treats you to your liking I will think the better of him. Nevertheless I cannot see eye to eye with you if you wish to persuade me that this new race of nabobs and financiers is of the importance of great commanders and conquerors.” Would he have him think that her husband was of integral service to the Emperor? Could she here and now say that a seriousness? He did not think she could. He had heard

that such men nowadays in some sort swayed the councils of public men. He was not so ignorant as not, in passing through Paris, to have heard of the husband of a Madame de . . . de Récamier whose husband was a banker and herself the mistress of the Prince of Prussia, so that many famous personages were under his or her influence and flocked to her routs. . . . "I am not completely ignorant of the *ton*!" he finished. "But there should be reason and proportion in things. . . ."

She had heard him with patience and said:

"Well, let there be enough of this. You will learn wisdom as you bark your shins on the rocks of the way. . . . I have not much time. The soldiery as you see is forming into columns. When they go and the Emperor, I must hurry to the palace. But listen to what I am about to say and think about it. . . ."

She reflected and began again:

"Whether my husband is indispensable to the Emperor I will not say—except to say that some such man is indispensable and if it had not been my husband it must have been another. And I will put it in this way. . . ." The Emperor could not have set out upon this adventure without the flood of gold that her husband poured out for him. Nay, the Emperor could not so much as have had the trumpets whose brayings and the drums whose hollow rumblings set their hearts beating—his even as hers! . . . He could have no muskets, nor batteries of cannon. . . . Not so much as men. . . . He could not stir hand nor foot without the gold her husband found him. . . . You might have brave shows: martial commanders that flame across the world; eagles

hat float from belfry to belfry. . . . But today they are small things. . . . Perhaps any man could be a great commander that had her husband and his friends to find the gold for him! "For sure," she ended, "no man could without them."

The young man exclaimed: "Enough of this, I cannot stand more of this!" There was reason in roasting eggs; gold had no more to do with the exploits of commanders than charity with chitterlings, and one would be as different from the other. She thought him an empty brain but he had studied campaigning and campaigns of the past. There was difference in the genius of commanders that gold will never buy and there was difference in the trust that subordinates repose in commanders that made all the difference in the world to the result of campaigns. In one commander men will repose such trust that they will march twice as fast, keep the field on a bloody day twice as long, aye, and die with a profound belief that they would not be killed. Under Moreau the French Army of the Rhine moved sluggishly, fought so-so, recoiled with frequency. The same troops, in the same places, with the same arms, rations, conditions and what you will, fought better under the Prince of the Moskwa, though Ney was no great general and had since, as they knew, proved himself a traitor foul as Judas.

She said: "No, no, no!" but he fulminated on.

The troops had by now dismissed and there was another, taller, thinner speaker on the platform, though Napoleon and, by now, the ladies of his family, supported him there. This was General Lassi, the governor of the land, who was telling the civilian population that their

august sovereign was called to his ancient glory and would shortly leave the island.

The young man desired Madame de Frèjus to mark that though the troops fought better under Ney than under Moreau they fought better still under Ney when Napoleon as First Consul directed Ney's strategy from Paris, and that when he was among them in person their excellence was unsurpassed by any troops in the world. She might think he had little experience in warfare but he could tell her this of his own experience in the Peninsular: when at first they had Bonaparte against them in the Madrid affair he had pushed them before him like sheep. His men were everywhere; detachments came down from inaccessible teeth of the sierras; guns sprang from the beds of rivers. The allied armies and their commanders were confused and bewildered. But the moment Napoleon gave over his command to that Prince of the Moskwa and the rest, the allies made shift to make a stand here and there. And again, the moment they had had Sir Arthur Wellesley in place of other commanders and the French had such generals as Marmont or Soult or the Duke d'Abrantès, although the terrain and conditions in each case were much the same the relative values and hearts of the troops were exactly reversed, so that even the Spanish auxiliaries took heart.

"Why," he said, "I assure you it was like a magic transformation and I too experienced that. . . . Till Wellington came we were not so much despondent as indifferent. *Poco curante!* . . . We wasted days over cards and wine and taking booty; we stayed over our bivouac fires till noon. . . . I do not say that when we fought we did not



fight well under such generals as Graham and Blake. . . . But the Grand Army under Wellington buffeted Massena as if he had been a bolster. . . . And their cavalry that, under Ney, for I do not say that Ney was not a good cavalryman, traitor though he proved himself. . . .”

“Why,” Madame de Frèjus interrupted imperatively, “I have listened with patience whilst you lectured me like an instructor of the school of St. Cyr addressing cadets, but I will not have you, because you are a jealous horse-soldier, fling the word ‘traitor’ at the bravest of the brave.”

“But it is from his Majesty himself that I have it!” the boy protested.

“If you had it from your Pauline herself,” Madame de Frèjus mocked him, “that should not make it any the more true. We all today perform duties that are out of harmony with those we performed yesterday, and the word traitor is best not bandied. The Prince of the Moskwa is more heroic than the Cid Campeador, more generous than Augustus, a greater leader than the Chevalier Bayard. Today he serves his king—the King of France; to the Emperor that was he may seem a traitor, but not to lesser play like you and me. . . . In short he is a good, kind man, who never enriched himself by plunder; and his wife is my best friend.”

“You should have told me that before or I would never have spoken against him though he gave us cavalry trouble enough!” the young man said. “But darling Iélène, why do you talk of ‘my’ Pauline?”

“By the goggling of the eye you may know the weak-



ness of the heart!" she answered . . . "and by your own taste in dancing. . . . And let me repeat that if you speak ill again of the Prince de la Moskwa we shall quarrel indeed, and your Pauline nor no woman shall save you. . . . Of your taste in dancing I say nothing, only I will say that in kindly disposition, in deportment, aye, and dancing too, the Prince is the spit of the Baron de Frèjus. . . . I have mistaken them the one for the other in the grey of the morning after dancing. . . . I got to know Marshal Ney and Madame la Maréchale so well because, at dawn, outside the Tuileries, I jumped once into the Marshal's carriage, mistaking his back for that of my good baron. And the Marshal treated me with the greatest respect and drove me to Madame la Maréchale, who was abed of an influenza; and the Baron must come fetch me there, because the Marshal would not drive me to Fontainebleau where then we lodged for fear his lateness should disquiet his lady!"

## CHAPTER FOUR

THEY continued for some time still in desultory conversation, the young man yearning all the time to introduce the topic of his desperate passion for that lady in pink percale, she seeking to enlighten him as to the facts of that day. It outraged him that she should think him in chains to the charms of the Princess Pauline. Actually, till the evening before, he had been uncertain as to which of these ladies held his allegiance and it was possibly to the tacit or implied approval that Mr. Assheton Smith had given to the amour that he credited the young man with carrying on with this young woman—it was possible that to that lofty approval he owed the sudden outburst of the passion for her to which he was now undoubtedly the thrall. He saw, as if instinctively with the eyes of his benefactor, that the Princess was undoubtedly too old for him; but he had, if only by inches, passed the stage at which very young men are enslaved by beauties of very developed charms. The Princess was of the most undoubted beauty still; her affairs had been sufficiently numerous and famous to make her conquest one that would gain one credit in the world and her charms were enhanced by costumes and jewellery, of nights of the most sumptuous and impressive kinds, and by day of the most ingenuous, inexpensive cottons, percales and dimities. But all those charms had vanished like a fall of snow

on water: the Princess now appeared to him as an agreeable and amusing brunette but one more calculated to be his aunt than his mistress. Madame de Frèjus shone with all the glories of youth, laughter, good-humour and approximation of age to his own. She had moreover just such gowns and jewels as the Princess Pauline: if younger in design her dresses and heavy collars of pearls and frontals and tiaras of rubies or emeralds were almost the more costly of the two, so that by night she appeared like a young fawn, the favourite of a Sultan, weighed down beneath a gorgeous panoply, whereas by day her cottons and percales too were of an exquisite simplicity and slightness. And minute by minute his wonder grew!

It expressed itself by his asking how old she was and adding that he had been born on May the 14th, 1790, being thus just short of twenty-four. . . . Hitherto he had considered none of these things in her connexion. She had been a youngish lady amongst several youngish ladies of a small Court rather free in its manners. The Marshals of Napoleon were notoriously free in their amours—and the Maréchales no less. The younger women-folk had run about showing a good deal of their lower limbs; he had held their wools whilst they wound them or had walked beside them along the olive paths above the sea carrying their drizzling bags. Madame de Frèjus had seemed a little more *sage* than the other ladies, which might have been put down to her official position at the court or to the fact that she was, in the end, of the *ancien régime*, a pupil of a pupil of Madame Campan, born in London and the like. And he had put her down as of his own age or a little less: the daughter of an old French

*émigré* marquis, the niece and cousin of innumerable French barons and counts who, whilst expressing unalterable loyalty to their exiled sovereign, had mostly, by degrees, gone over to him whom they had styled the usurper Buonaparte or the Corsican Ogre.

His father was an intimate friend of her parents, the intimacy having dated from long before the Revolution. . . . But that was nothing unusual: the squires of England, such as had made the Grand Tour in the middle years of the eighteenth century, had all had their fringes of friends or pensioners who had been the courtiers of Louis XVI. So that Madame de Frèjus might well feel gratitude to his father, whilst he might know nothing about it. His father was not the man to speak much about his intimacy with or even his benefactions to an *émigré* noble.

That he should have dowered that daughter was also nothing out of the way. English squires of great wealth—and Squire Feilding was of very great wealth indeed—were accustomed to lavishing large sums on dowering all sorts of deserving young women, daughters of distant relatives, of house-servants, of tenants, of tradesmen in the neighbouring county towns. And the *émigré* nobility might well be regarded as much on a level with the tradesmen, attorneys, doctors or clergy of neighbouring county towns. So that Madame de Frèjus had indeed come a little near the knuckle when she had said that he had hitherto regarded her as a governess of the family married to a butler. . . .

She had certainly guided him through several nasty places since they had met first in Genoa, where he had

been apt to utter Liberal opinions such as might compromise him with the Austrian conquerors. She had warned him against consorting with certain undesirable families; although she lived in a seclusion in Genoa that had given her the aspect of the inmate of a harem or a convent, she had contrived to get him the *pas* with several other of the best families. When he had been at last in something of a scrape with the Austrian authorities because of his outspoken admiration for the Italian underdogs as against their Germanic rulers, she had spoken words here or there that had prevented his being expelled from the Italo-Austrian territories and, finally, by a word to the Princess Pauline she had assured his reception as *persona grata* at the little court of Elba.

But he was bound to acknowledge that in his then fatuousness he had accepted these services very much as the heir of the family might accept the ministrations of the ex-governess married to the butler.

The revolution in his mind had certainly come when Assheton Smith had seemed to take both her charm and her social position with an unexpected seriousness, and, surprised as he had been to see the Baron de Frèjus in Assheton Smith's galley stern-sheets for all the world like any other great leader of the *ton* and avowedly in an adventure with that demi-god, he was all the readier to accept her view of herself as having an august sort of authority in salons where as a queen she danced it round with potentates from the Prince Regent to Metternich himself or with Benjamin Constant who owed money to Madame de Staël.

Madame de Frèjus was talking of Benjamin Constant—

whom she much disliked—at the moment when he put the question as to her age. For himself he knew nothing of that fellow and only little more about Madame de Staël. But Constant seemed to be a plaguy, disagreeable, discreditable individual.

Hélène de Frèjus for her part was thinking of little but making this head-strong young man—to whose family she was tied by strong liens of gratitude—realize some of the dangers that he would run in a world that to her seemed miserably full of pitfalls. So she told him a story of the intrigue between Benjamin Constant, the disagreeable and opinionative Whig, and Madame de Staël, the daughter of the financier, and Madame de Récamier, the wife of the banker. It appeared that the Baron de Frèjus by refusing in 1813 accommodation to the Whig statesman had done Napoleon a distinctly bad turn that might be expected to bear fruit on the Emperor's return to Paris. Madame de Staël had been a persistent enemy of the Hero, and, if Constant had gone through the disagreeable process of paying her the money that he owed her, he might in his irritation have swung round towards the Emperor. But the Baron having refused him money so that he had not paid the lady, merely writing her heroic and patriotic letters and the lady having become pacified—and the statesman having fallen under the sway of Madame de Récamier who disliked Napoleon almost more than had Madame de Staël and whose husband was engaged in speculations whose success depended on the continued banishment of the Emperor . . . all these things together would make difficulties for the Emperor's restoration. For Monsieur Constant was a tiresome fellow who had the power and



every disposition to make himself disagreeable to everybody over things like Constitutions. . . . And that was only a little part of the thousands of similar difficulties that would have to be faced, the thousands of pitfalls that would have to be skirted. There would have to be financial negotiations, constitutional and parliamentary negotiations; a million, if not two million livres would have to be found to bribe Metternich if the wife and child of Napoleon were to be restored to him; as much for Talleyrand who was indispensable. As much for Constant, perhaps, if he were in the mood to be bribed, for on one day he would have an itching palm and on the next would be as incorruptibly sea-green as Robespierre himself.

So Hélène de Frèjus talked since, having accepted the inevitability of George Feilding's making the expedition with Napoleon, she wished him to have at least some idea of what awaited him and Napoleon. She wanted him above all to avoid making enthusiastic or boastful speeches about the Emperor's achievements, for she knew that in a world of cross-currents and spies every word that he did use would be treasured up against him in case final success did not crown the Emperor's undertakings. And it appeared to her that the best way to ensure that would be to inspire him with the view that the campaign would by no means be over even if Napoleon entered Paris in triumph.

But even at that she did not reveal to him half her fears.

For she could not get over her misgivings at the fact of Mr. Assheton Smith's arrival in that port with a yacht reputed to be the fastest sailing vessel in the world. Fast-

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sailing yachts in her eyes were the chief arms of the financiers who were her husband's co-conspirators or competitors. She had known and much admired Lord Cochrane in the days when he had been the dashing commander of frigates or commodore of frigate squadrons. He had cut a great figure at her routs in Regent's Park when all London flocked to the halls or the *fêtes champêtres* of the enormously wealthy banker with the beautiful young wife who had the backing of the haughtiest of the French nobility and of some of the wealthiest of the British squirearchy. And, with her knowledge of men, she was reluctant to believe that such a gallant figure as Cochrane with his thousands and thousands of pounds of prize-money gained in the most heroic of services—that such a gallant captain would stoop further to enrich himself by the miserable expedient of rigging the public funds. But, alas, Cochrane now lay in prison—or he had lately escaped from prison—whither he had been consigned on a charge of having come over in a swift yacht, the property of a great house of financiers, and of having proceeded to London in a specially horsed postchaise bearing false news of a great victory over Napoleon, years before the power of the emperor had in any way diminished. It could not be proved that he himself had made any money on Change at his associates and the house to which the yacht belonged had made fortunes each one by selling public and military funds on the rise—and also by speculating on the fall which was certain when the news of victory was contradicted.

She did not think the Baron de Frèjus had been concerned in that speculation—nay, she was fairly certain

from the way in which he had commented on the affair that he had not. But here he was now—and on the fastest yacht in the world!—in company with a British officer and a milor who if he was no financier was at least one of the richest men in the habitable globe. And, as had been the case with Lord Cochrane, she had sufficient knowledge of men to know that Mr. Assheton Smith was fine gentleman enough not to dabble on the stock exchange in small plebeian matters! . . . But would he withstand the attraction of gold in mountain heaps: vast gains of gold? In that contemplation there was something heroic. At any rate there was nothing low about it. She had seen that fever work in her husband. Gold in those days had so terrible an attraction because life moved so rapidly that new fortune of the older kind, made and consolidated in broad acres, could pay the piper. If she could suspect—as she strongly suspected—the Prince Regent of having had a finger in Lord Cochrane's pie, thus speculating in the misfortunes of the country over which he ruled and which supported him, whom could you not suspect?

She certainly suspected her husband's attachment to the cause of the Emperor. Or no, that was not the way to put it. For the Baron's attachment to the Emperor's person was in truth very deep and so, by implication, Napoleon's cause might be considered to be his cause. It was easy to see that the Baron considered himself as, in his vast financial adventures, of a like nature to this King of Elbas who was about to set out with six hundred veterans and three hundred Elban militiamen on the conquest of the orb of the world. If it would not have been a presumption bordering on blasphemy he might have styled himself the

Napoleon of *la haute finance*. So that he was quite ready to engage his talents in the financial service of the King.

But there—and it was the only thing that she had against her husband, who had always showed himself generous, indulgent and indeed respectful—it rested. He was quite ready, with his financial genius and audacity, to administer the revenues of the Princess Pauline as to finance the early days of the expedition. And he was pretty nearly ready to guarantee that even should the expedition prove a failure he would be able with his foreknowledge and abilities to ensure that the Princess personally should be no loser. But he was not ready to adventure more than the fewest possible pence of his own in the King's service. That seemed to Hélène de Frèjus to be horrible. With her intense devotion both to the cause and person of the King, who appeared to her to take station only next to God, she would have preferred, were the Imperial cause to meet with disaster, it being the cause of France, to share in the ruin and to live in sackcloth for the rest of her days.

The Baron, however, was good-humouredly adamant in the matter when he talked with his wife—which, of late years, having proved the seriousness of her nature and her power of keeping secrets, he had quite freely done. He was a lonely man. His schemes if they were seldom nefarious nevertheless demanded not only circumspection and secrecy and it was almost a luxury to have someone to whom he could talk with cynical freedom of his plans and aspirations. He was assured of her perfect loyalty.

That might well not have been the case and she not much to blame. In the matter of family, compared with

himself, who was actually the son of a Rhine fisherman; she was august and unattainable. Her marriage with him had conferred upon him singular benefits, so that, without anyone much blaming her, she might well have been content to have little to do with him after the marriage. She was aware that the marriage had been of professional advantage to him. Without her to grace his halls he might have waited for ever for the visits of the splendid personages who after that event were pleased now and again both in London before the restoration of Louis XVIII, in Paris subsequently, and later still in Genoa, to grace his halls. That had been of signal advantage to him. In his personal contacts with the Great he was not so much a money-lender as a re-arranger of dilapidated fortunes. Thus such clients as he condescended to advise rather regarded him with gratitude than took umbrage at being indebted to him. His reward was the communication by them of previous information as to news of events of importance. Of that he availed himself in his private speculations. That his H  l  ne knew: what she did not know—or only dimly suspected—was that the relatively small dowry that had been provided for her by Squire Feilding had enabled her husband to turn a very bad corner indeed. At that time he had had to face such a succession of disasters that he was confoundedly hard put to it to lay his hand on any ready money at all and her few thousand pounds in cash had just enabled him to make such ready money payments as every man must from time to time face, whilst the social relationships which the mere announcement of his engagement to the daughter of the Marquis de Dinart, the prot  g  e of Squire Feilding and



favourite godchild of the august daughter of Louis XVI, had enabled him to make—these social relationships proved amply sufficient to let him turn his bad corner. But even had Hélène had the knowledge to the full, it is unlikely that the fact would have modified the gratitude for his generosity that she subsequently felt. Even the least valuable of the several pearl chains that she possessed would have largely outweighed in value the sum she had brought him and his continual anxiety for her comfort and the splendid establishments that he had provided for her, whether in Regent's Park, at Fontainebleau or in Genoa, were cause for gratitude indeed to a young girl who in childhood had known for prolonged periods the pangs of actual hunger and who had never really known what it was to be dressed in accordance with her birth and station.

There existed therefore between this pair a mutual understanding that was founded on the one hand on the respect that he had for her and the gratitude she felt for him; whilst his cynical comments on or news of his distinguished clients had hitherto proved a source of constant entertainment to her, as if she lived within the leaves of a romance published in frequent instalments.

In personal appearance he was not agreeable. If he resembled, as he certainly did, Ney, Prince de la Moskwa, he was an even coarser edition of that heroic figure. On account of Ney's rustic and old-fashioned appearance, upon his first proposal to Mademoiselle Augié, the beautiful, brunette royalist and favourite pupil of Madame Campan, Ney had been refused with indignation and tears even though the proposal had been suggested and ac-



ceptance enjoined by Josephine Bonaparte, the wife of the then First Consul. . . . And Hélène remembered her own tears when first de Frèjus had been proposed to her for her mate.

Ney however had cut off his pigtail, shaved his red whiskers, taken lessons in such small talk as amused young ladies, and he and his Aglaë had ever since lived as turtle-doves in such fidelity on both parts and in such concord as had distinguished the families of none of the greater Marshals of Napoleon's court—and few enough couples less exalted. Ney however was also a kindly, honourable and gentle creature. Unlike too many of the Marshals he had enriched himself neither by plunder nor any other questionable expedients and when at home he delighted rather in enhancing the fruitfulness of his several country estates and in conversing with Madame Aglaë than in intrigues for advancement at Court. And Madame Aglaë, tall, graceful and dark, struck Hélène as the most charming of her sex. An admirable housekeeper, a tall, dark, gracious harmony.

And it was undoubtedly the wedded tranquillity and affection of the Neys that had made Madame de Frèjus determine on fidelity to her Baron. He was on the whole a man to whom not to be faithful—for a young and beautiful woman. His attractions such as they were were of the mind, and, of course, of the pocket; and it was as if, unlike the Marshal, he had neither cut off his whiskers nor attended to his manners. He was thirty-two or three years older than herself and though when excited he could be for a time physically active, as he had shown in the dance the night before, he was usually slothful and had

From the woman's point of view no very agreeable characteristics. Nevertheless her gratitude and her respect for the ebullient masterfulness of his enterprises made her not only faithful to him but extremely resentful of any reflections on his person or his talents. The men of the courts of the Prince Regent, of Louis XVIII and of the King of Elba being what they were and her position what it was, it was not to be wondered at that she could have swept together from amongst unworthy receptacles for letritus, at least half a bushel of billets bearing the names of the greatest and most elegant of the day and several packfuls of bouquets bearing cards inscribed with the deepest of sighs and other evidences of desire for her person. She had thrown them all into her guilt waste-paper basket or had had the flowers conveyed to the hospitals—all except one or two missives that she had preserved because the historic names of the senders had flattered her or because of timid earnestnesses in their style that had touched her or else because she liked the face or the voice or the figure of the sender. But all these affairs had been of the most transitory: did any of these suitors return to the charge he would be certain to begin by pointing out the unworthy nature of the Baron de Frèjus, and then, for sure, he was sent away with such a flea in his ear as ensured his never returning.

It was indeed the very frequency and usualness of affairs of that sort all the world over that made her resolve the more firmly to be faithful to her unpresentable lord. The perpetual stallion-neighing of the men after the wives of their neighbours and the universal and immediate succumbing of the wives with the inevitable con-

sequent outcry, clamour, racket and recrimination amongst which she had lived had made her determined that she at least would have a quiet life and her husband an unperforated damask waistcoat.

For her knowledge of the life of court ladies of whatever court of that day was of a sort to make her prefer fireside joys to the most glittering—or the most romantically passionate—of illegitimate attachments. You had to be either the widow of Monsieur de Clignancourt who was shot through the stomach after an infinite number of jealous brawls; or, which was almost more disagreeable, the wife of Monsieur Felix de la Presse whose cuckoldom and cowardice were so notorious that whole roomfuls tittered when you entered them on his arm. Or your lover might be killed by your brothers anxious that your wealthy and influential marriage should not be dissolved to their disadvantage. Or perhaps worst of all your fate might be that of Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantès, wife of Marshal Junot, whose lover had agonizingly deserted and betrayed her after she had been through unceasing brawls and the disclosures of her correspondence which had been captured by Cossacks in the snows of Russia. So she had been left, poor woman, penniless, loverless, after having in vain betrayed her husband with Monsieur de Chatillon and her country to Metternich, and after the public lunacy and ignominious death of Junot. . . .

No, women were weak and men invariably betrayed—betraying inevitably when a woman's needs were at their sorest, whether Bonapartist marshals or royalist young viscounts about the Town, and such life was all outcry and scandal and hopeless regret for heartless desertion.

So, for herself, Hélène de Frèjus preferred to have her husband about her to stall off the too adventurous, and she looked back with regret to their days in Genoa where the custom of Italian good society exacted that a wife should live behind iron window bars and never go out lacking a duenna moustached like a grenadier.

Thus she doubly regretted that the Baron had gone off with Assheton Smith in his too swift white yacht. He left her exposed to the most reckless spirits of Napoleon's supporters and, she dreadfully feared, was gone with the milord on a financial expedition that might aim at making a profit out of Napoleon's discomfiture quite as much as out of his success. That would be unforgivable!

Latterly, indeed, her entertainment in the Baron's society had more than a little palled. His disquisitions on the state of society and the world in general had taken almost too exclusively, in private, the shape of declaiming on the difficulties that would attend Napoleon's attempt to reach Paris and the appalling complications that would meet him if he ever got there. . . . He would have to return in the guise of a constitutional ruler—but how could he play the constitutionalist? He would have to bend his neck to a plebiscite that he would not have the organization to coerce; there would be millions of money to be raised, and whence was the money to come with an empty treasury such as the Bourbons would take care to leave him and a disorganized system of collecting public taxes? The Baron had no idea.

So, in private to his wife, the Baron had lately talked incessantly and in that way he had done a great deal to weary and depress her. It was not that she did not largely

share his views, the reasons for her doubts being largely the unscrupulous habits of mind, the ostentation and absence of fidelity of the men of her time, so that, if the Emperor's success were not rapid and overwhelming she did not see how any large measure of support or even common loyalty would be afforded to his government. She foresaw, indeed, almost as clearly as her husband the difficulties and perils that would beset the new undertaking, but she resented having the possibilities of failure continually brought to her attention. She wished, the die being cast and the crossing of the Rubicon almost set out on, to forget these doubts and think only of that which had already attended so many miracles of unlikely success—the star of the Man of Destiny. If the Duke of Wellington, Napoleon's chief rival, now, in military fame, could say that the presence of Napoleon alone with his army was worth thirty thousand men, was it unreasonable to think that the star of Napoleon's destiny was equal to the raising of as many million pounds or the unmasking and frustrating of as many thousand treacheries. . . .

And she could not get away from the uneasy feeling that her husband, by dwelling on the difficulties in which Napoleon might find himself—that with that sort of talk he might be aiming at preparing her mind for a proposal at least financially to betray the Emperor. He might very well say—she had heard him say in cases where her heart was not seriously engaged—that merely to take a profit from the falling of prices of the funds of a nation was not necessarily to do any harm to that nation. But from that to taking measures to make those funds fall was a very small step indeed.



So though she was out of heart at any rate for the time with the Baron, she could not but regret his having gone away in that white yacht. . . . White was a colour that brought ill-luck, and the crew of that yacht not only dressed in white but wore stocking-caps of scarlet wool—the cap of Liberty of the Revolution that again could be regarded as no agreeable symbol since the King and his expedition could expect little but the most bitter opposition from what remained of the old-fashioned Jacobins of the Revolution. She could not imagine that Mr. Assheton Smith was a Jacobin or that he would purposely make his crew sport that symbol of theirs. But there it was, the whole affair was disagreeable and left her in no pleasant mood.

Moreover, the very swiftness of the yacht had contributed to forcing the young Feilding to remain on the island till the King was ready to start—to remain temporarily really a prisoner. In this way: The question about violets that Gatti di Vivario, the night before, had put to the young man and the young man's answers were in very serious fact part of a ritual by which the Imperialists when in France recognized each other. Napoleon had detached four hundred of his small army to go to the mainland—four hundred of his trustiest—for no other purpose than to spread that as if Masonic formula in places where it could be useful—and the young Feilding's apparent possession of that knowledge had absolutely precluded his permitting the boy to get away—in the swiftest vessel in the world!

The boy might be perfectly trustworthy but he was in possession of knowledge that was sufficient to hang several



hundred thousand—a couple of million Frenchmen—for the conspiracy had by now assumed immense dimensions owing to the unpopularity of the Bourbons, from whose yoke all France prayed for deliverance. Was it then thinkable that the boy should be allowed to go? The yacht might sail straight for Toulon and that same day the news might be in Paris, for the weather was perfectly clear and the telegraph would therefore almost certainly be working. So, once the Colonel-Count had that news, the young Feilding's fate had been sealed. He had had to fight his duel and to give his parole in circumstances that precluded his communicating even with persons on the island. The authorities had indeed very nearly maintained their embargo on the yacht and the person of Assheton Smith himself; but their fear of embarrassing a person so important, their need of money and the outcry that the Baron had made had been sufficient to lead them in his case to take the chance. The Baron had represented that he had already had sufficient trouble in raising his initial twelve million livres: here was a nabob, a milord, the richest man in the world, who avowed himself willing to raise a similar sum with a stroke of the pen. They could not think of imprisoning him. They had not.

But that fact alone was cause of further misgivings to the girl. She had now no doubt that the milord had come to that unlikely island by pre-arrangement with the Baron. Why else in the world should he have come? And the fact that she already doubted the loyalty of her husband made the affair seem doubly sinister. It was true that by giving passage to Sir Neil Campbell they prevented his seeing the preparations for, and the departure of the expedition.

But that, even if they wanted the expedition eventually to fail might very well agree with their plans. To nip the expedition in the bud would be to see the funds of the French kingdom very little affected, but to let it prosper up to a certain point and then overwhelm it would be to cause such a commotion in the state funds of all Europe that they might well aggregate, with their foreknowledge, fortunes that would stagger the imaginations of mankind. Thus Madame de Frèjus was in no pleasant frame of mind; indeed her nerves were very much deranged—so much deranged that she said to herself with a sort of distracted vindictiveness that if she was ever going to be unfaithful to her husband, then or thereabouts would be the time. It would give her no particular pleasure and would serve no particular purpose but it would at least avenge the Emperor on the person of a very untrustworthy servant.

So it was with a certain peculiar shock that she realized that the young Feilding was not only setting out on making the most outspoken love to her but that he was beginning by discrediting the person of her husband although he had already reproved him for so doing.

The sensation was very peculiar; it was as if a beast of prey had looked at her with green eyes at a moment when she was perfectly protected. For indeed, by this time, she was really so hurried that there could not be the least little moment of time to devote to the softer emotions. Hitherto she had regarded him as the sort of large gentle water-bound that you might like but need not love. And she had three copies of three several proclamations to write out for his Majesty, her hand being especially suave and

legible. And she had to think out some sort of answers to this young man—such as, when he said that he could not sleep for thinking of her charms, she must say that so many men had told her the same that she must needs believe it in his case. That gave him quite a lot to talk of for himself: in his jealous rage he was ready to tear the topmasts off the ships. . . . Her specially beautiful proclamations were meant for the mayors or governors of Antibes, Toulon, Grenoble or Lyons if no printer could be found for them owing to the rapidity of the Emperor's march. So her handwriting would go out attached to the signature, "Napoleon, Emperor of the French!" . . . But of course it might not be impossible to love that boy. His mad rage aged him. His features were drawn taut like those of a hard-bitten rider! That would make a pretty kettle of fish.

She also had to be certain that the stars on his Majesty's tiresome bottle-green garment were properly brightened by the pantry-maids and his third pair of shorts repasséd. Emperors needed such a wilderness of clothes. Blue with embroidery for parades; grey capotes for route-riding in mist; bottle-green with an infinity of gilt-laced olive leaves for audiences to prefects or Academicians. There was not a woman at the court, from Madame Mère and the Princess Pauline to the smallest kitchen maid, that had not her finger-tips needle-pricked. . . .

Well, he was aged! He had fought a very passable duel: that took you out of the cockerels' pen. Danger! Danger! She knew, from having raised spaniel puppy families, that an age came when the sexes must be separated. . . . A passable duel! He had been said to have tremendous

strength. He had an ingenuous, honest cast of countenance; she had always lately liked to look on it but she had thought he had been Pauline's. She remembered to have thought that that had seemed a little ridiculous. Then . . . Danger! Danger! . . . She must run. The sexes must be separated. . . . Well, she would be seeing this young man—though she was not going to tell him so!—almost every day for a long time. For as long as it took to get to Paris with the Army. She would have to accompany her husband, who had to accompany the troops. Because there were certain papers that she had to sign. It was one of the few things that she had not liked about Monsieur le Baron—that he juggled with her jointure papers to protect himself from his creditors. Only at times of extreme risks. . . . Well, this was a time of extreme risk. . . .

What then if the young man were very strong: a perfect Hercules and Orlando Furioso in one? The Baron must risk that. The young man would as like as not ride beside her carriage in the rear of the troops. For who could tell that the peasants might not stone the carriage? Then he would need her Hercules!

She slightly picked up her skirts and ran. She ran away like an antelope without ever troubling to find a repartee for that young man. The Emperor's old clothes awaited her. Poor dear, he had been very neglected. And her handwriting was to be broadcasted throughout France, married to His!

When she had run fifty yards or so she said: "Oh, poor fellow!" and, dropping her skirts, turned round and raised her gloved hands to her lips. She filled the kid-palm with kisses and then, like a little diskobolos, tossed the

kisses in his direction where, by the ship-side, he stood uttering imprecations, both his hands on a level with his shako or higher.

To have thrown those kisses had been no bad way out of the dilemma. It had been infantile, such as sister might offer to brother. Still, kisses were kisses: if they did not imply any promises delivered in that way they need not be considered a deterrent. Not of necessity! They might be regarded as keeping him to heel. Strictly to heel. Until something fortunate occurred. The Baron was a heavy man. She wished him no ill, even if she wished him a thought less well than she had when coming down to the ship an hour ago. But if one is a very heavy man, eating to the further end of copiousness and drinking as sea caverns suck up the sea. . . . Or these divorces . . . Madame de Récamier had twice begun to divorce *her* financier!

So she might consider herself to have done not so badly. If she had not fully persuaded the young man as to the compromising nature of his accompanying that expedition yet she had him at least firmly tied to her apron-strings so that, without bad luck, she might keep him from making too much of a fool of himself!

The harbour clock struck five. Good heavens, five, and all the forks of the Emperor's travelling case probably not yet found. She ran faster and faster over the flagstones.

## CHAPTER FIVE

THE following days of still ship-gliding in light airs came back to him mostly as memories of atrocious proclamation-writing. He had sat on a camp-stool up to a cask that had its head pierced to hold an inkwell and had written alternately frantic appeals to his Hélène and the grandiose phrases that Napoleon addressed to every class of the population that he hoped to recapture. He thought he should never see her again—or never till they got to Paris, which was an eternity. And here, as like as not, she would be shut up as in a harem! He had moreover spoken to him with such cruel mockery that his senses seemed numbed.

But everybody copied proclamations, the troops and many of the officers producing, with tongues that followed their pen-points, copies that surely no eye would ever be able to read. Nevertheless France had to be plastered with Napoleon's proclamations and a thousand or so of souls aboard that flotilla wrote away at them night and day—proclamations addressed to the French, the Walloons, the Germans, the Poles, the Neapolitans. To the effect that the turn of the Emperor meant the restoration of liberties and eternal peace! It might be many days before they could get at a printer and, in that era when newspapers were rare and news travelled slowly, a single proclamation stuck on the door of a village church might affect and instruct a whole commune and its neighbours.



There were incidents on the voyage, of course, but they only vaguely came back to him because of the impassioned state in which he was. Once all the troops were sent below and he himself was asked to walk the poop in as visible a way as possible—with the aim of giving the idea that his scarlet uniform might betoken that there were British troops aboard the *Inconstant*. There was then a cruiser called the *Zephyr* of the French navy alongside them and a conversation took place between Tailhade, the mate of the *Inconstant*, and the captain of the other vessel, who appeared to be an old friend, Tailhade inviting his friend the captain aboard to take some refreshment, giving news that the *Inconstant* was bound for Genoa. The *Zephyr* was for Livorno.

The dreadful nature of his interview with Madame de Frèjus had deprived the young man almost of the powers of attention, so that he could never be certain of what actually passed—or of all that actually passed—on that expedition until they had got very much farther than they then were. He would hear the captain of the *Zephyr* exchange a sentence with Tailhade and then his poor mind would wander back to how Madame de Frèjus had said that she owed final gratitude to her husband and as to how he would have answered her if she had given him the chance. So in after years he would find himself amongst men who discussed the escape from Elba and alleged details such as he had never observed and yet he would hardly be in a position to contradict them.

Thus, though he was not unaware of the dreadful excitement and suspense that seemed to make the whole of the *Inconstant* tremble to her keel, nevertheless it was

universally alleged that when the captain of the *Zephyr* asked how the Emperor was it was the Emperor himself who had answered that his Majesty was in his usual health. The Emperor had been below the steps up to the poop, waiting to rush up and declare himself if the necessity arose; he had indeed been looking up at the young Feilding with an absolutely impassive face, his head a little on one side as if to hear the conversation the better. Thus it was unlikely that Captain Andrieux could have heard the Emperor had he so answered; besides both Andrieux and Tailhade used speaking trumpets and did not hear each other very well, so that it was eminently unlikely that the Emperor, who had none and was boxed in below, could have made his voice carry to the other ship. Nor indeed was the Emperor one likely to indulge himself in such undignified humour—on the other hand he might have said dryly to Count Bertrand who was near him that he was in his usual spirits—which were those of confidence in great enterprises—and the young man might not have heard it.

The *Zephyr*, however, sailed away and the young man went back to his tub, inkwell and writings. Incessant conferences went on between the Emperor and Bertrand, officer after officer being called to the Emperor's cabin. Once or twice Feilding himself was invited to go before the Demi-God and give information as to matters that to him seemed curious and obscure. Thus once he was asked as to the uniform of the various branches of the Regiment of Artillery in His Britannic Majesty's Forces; again as to other details of uniform; again as to the popularity of Caroline, Princess of Wales.

And having reflected on what Madame de Frèjus had said to him, he had very politely refused to give any information as to the details of uniform, though to the best of his information he answered that the Prince Regent's Consort had had a large and powerful following in England until she had left the country to settle down in Naples. Napoleon, fixing him with his penetrating glance, had asked him: were the adherents of the injured Princess of Wales really so much the adherents of that lady or were they merely obstructors of the government? . . .

The sole reason that the young man could see for such a question was that Napoleon might entertain the idea of seizing the person of the Princess who was at Naples and coercing her into consenting to leading an expedition into England or at least to signing a proclamation demanding the abdication of the Prince Regent. And that being the sole perceptible reason for such a question, the young man answered—and true enough—that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He added that Madame de Frèjus could undoubtedly have given the Emperor correct information upon that point, the poor fellow having the faintest hope that the Emperor might send for his Hélène, though how she was to be brought there he did not know.

Once he had the honour of dining with the Emperor. It was true, the legend that said that on campaign he had always a new fowl spitted and roasted every half hour so that he might eat at any moment of the night or day. Presumably he was inclined to eat that day at about the usual dinner hour of the young man—half past two—for Feilding found his Majesty seated at table in the little cabin full of red velvet couches and gilding, tearing away at a

partridge. For Perducet or Perduca had succeeded in bringing on board a great number of those birds and spitted them alternately with fowls in the hope that the Emperor might consume some of that health-giving game.

For time enough to tear up and devour that food Napoleon sat silent—plunged, you would have said, in a gloomy reverie. But the young man knew enough of the multiplicity of things about which the Emperor must think to be aware that that indefatigable brain was framing some project—as it might be, the means for taking by assault the city of Grenoble, for from time to time he made a mark with a gold pencil on the damask of the table-cloth. His hands were extraordinarily white and waxen. It was a singular thing that the young man could never after remember what was the colour of Napoleon's eyes—but indeed no man ever remembered the colour of his eyes. That secret has gone to the grave.

They were most likely blue and it was no doubt the blaze of blue eyes in the pallid face with the dark hair that kept mankind from looking into them. At any rate our young man could never support his glance for more than a short glimpse, yet, though he looked down, he was aware when the Emperor was looking at him.

The food finished, Napoleon remained sitting, rather lumpish, his yellow waistcoat with all the lower buttons undone. He was fingering a wine-glass that he had just emptied of Cap Corse wine, twirling it slowly by the stem. Suddenly he said:

“Would you sign a proclamation to your countrymen?”

The boy started at the sudden words. But: “No,” he said resolutely, “I will sign no proclamation to my coun-

trymen unless your Majesty should put great pressure on me and then only if it were such as I agreed with in my conscience. You are aware, Sire, that this your enterprise has my humble but ardent support."

"But you stop it at the bounds of your island. And truly it would harm you in your own country. I am aware of that and shall put no pressure on you." He said he had been about to ask the boy to sign a statement—a proclamation—to the effect that his conviction was that the Emperor's return meant peace and well-being to the world—that France, restored to her prosperity, with all the improvements in her agriculture that the Emperor had promoted, would shed the light of these inventions amongst the surrounding populations—and Napoleon finished: "You are aware that there are famine, pestilence and revolt in your own country and most other of the countries that lie around France are in a desperate condition. . . ." The young man coloured; nay, his eyes filled with tears.

"I am aware of the great favours that your Majesty has bestowed on me. I know nothing of the state of my country, having been absent from it for several years. . . ." He could avow what his Majesty said as to his intentions. He could avow it with a full conscience for he fully believed it. . . . But, in short, this was just such an action—to sign a proclamation!—as Madame de Frèjus warned him against. "And," he added, "I have, I know not why, an instinctive repugnance for the idea."

"Well, it would harm your career," the Emperor said indulgently; "I have too much honour for the cloth that



both you and I wear in different colours to press you. Let it then go!"

The Emperor sat, his eyes half-closed, twirling and twirling the stem of his glass; the young man's cheeks remained flushed and hot with mortification. He hated himself for having refused this Demi-God anything; yet undoubtedly that had been in the spirit of his Hélène's recommendations and the idea inspired him with great repugnance. Why, he could not himself tell very well. He knew that the Emperor was not at war with England and was convinced that he cherished no designs against that country. But bring himself to it he could not. And he exclaimed:

"I am aware that a sovereign must not be questioned, nevertheless, may I not ask your Majesty to consider how tiny a position I occupy in the cosmogony of Britain's Empire and of how little avail my voice could prove? May I not draw your Majesty's attention to greater signatories? May I not suggest, Sire, that you invite my patron Mr. Assheton Smith to be one. That he would readily do so your Majesty may believe when you consider that he is supporting this expedition with his unbounded resources."

"He is supporting this expedition!" the Emperor said without emotion. "Well, the admirable de Frèjus has his mysteries. . . . But if the milor supports . . ."

He appeared somnolent. Suddenly he said like a thunderbolt:

"Cannot you then see that more and more the nations of the earth support me? Are you not aware that I have



only to plant my feet on the cliffs of Dover and all the oppressed of your country would flock to meet me and triumphantly we should march on London as tomorrow we shall march triumphantly on Paris?"

The young man thought on Madame de Frèjus.

"Sire," he said, "I am no Tom-Paine man, nor no Radical. Nor do I believe that your Majesty would stoop to obtain the support of the rabble!"

"*Mon lieutenant*," his Majesty said, "you have little knowledge of your own country."

"I am amazed at the knowledge that your Majesty possesses," the young man answered, "but it is all against what I myself know. I do not believe that the rabble could ever take heart enough to march on the metropolis!"

"Young sir," the Emperor said with some heat, "I assure you that the whole face of your country is impassable because of the marching of rebel bands." . . . Even as Louis the Eighteenth had neglected to abolish the *droit des réguliers* so at the end of the last war. The British rulers refused to abolish the tax on the incomes of the poor, though they had promised it. War with America had cut off the corn of the poor. And what America did with English hands and genius should not England in her turn achieve? The boy had talked of rabble, but it would astonish him to hear the names of statesmen and politicians of his country—aye and of substantially wealthy philosophers of the middling classes, that visited the Emperor in Elba, offering him sympathy and assistance against his oppressors. If latterly he had cut off intercourse with almost all English visitors except those of the best-bred class, it was because he was afraid that your

Sir Neil Campbell would report to the powers that be in England that he was conspiring with their subjects against their throne. But he had still the names of those correspondents, and they were thousands. . . . No, with scandal assailing the occupants of the throne, with hatred so great as is felt for such ministers as Liverpool or Canning or Castlereagh, with starvation, treason and red rebellion amongst the common orders, what emotions of liberty, what chords in the lyre of Freedom, should not sound across England at the news that the eagles of Napoleon were again on the wing and Napoleon once more at his old task of bringing freedom to the oppressed and food to the starving!

It was impossible that dejection should not sweep over the young man at this picture of the disasters of his country uttered in this earth-shaking voice. It seemed incredible that the green and fertile pastures over which his ancestors had reigned and which he himself must one day own—it seemed to him impossible that those green and fertile acres could know the shadow of disaster. Nevertheless he saw, in his mind's eye, the great elms above his father's house drooping as if with blight, the grass blackened by frosts, the wheat trampled by innumerable feet, the rose-gardens rooted up, the house—the great house itself, windowless, half unroofed, desolate. . . . So great was the spell of Napoleon's voice!

Tears filled his eyes and then he perceived that the Demi-God himself had veiled the lightning of his glance.

"Why," he said, "you are an admirable young man and I would not have you depart by one peccadillo from the

dictates of your service and of your love for your country.”

The boy then sobbed.

“Sire,” he said, “I am so well assured of your goodness . . . your benevolence . . . your desire for peace . . .

“Why,” the Emperor said, “you shall do what you will by word of mouth or by letter to your countrymen.” There were, he continued, already so many of them assured of his benevolence, disgusted at the way in which he had been despoiled by the Bourbons or discontented with their rulers, that it should need but a very few more—a very slight push to the snowball—to make Liverpool and Castlereagh—nay and Wellington himself—realize that even were an assault on an innocent and glorious country such as France no crime, the attempt should be unavailing for lack of men to follow their standards.

An immense dejection overcame the young man. They sat silent. Napoleon had crossed his white hands on his generous yellow waistcoat; into that space of gilding and red velvet through the open casement, over the tufts of violets that Perducet had planted in the window-boxes came the rippling conversation of wavelets about the stern and rudder, for the day was so smooth that they had scarcely steerage-way.

These light winds had much delayed them. It was then the 28th of February and they had only lately sighted the road of Noli, making for Frèjus. They had hoped to be far from Capraia on the morning of their sailing but dawn had found them between Capraia and Elba—and so it had been with the passing of Leghorn and all the way. But

they might soon hope to be off Golfe Juan. They had sighted Antibes at noon.

Dejection! . . . For, if he knew little of his country itself at the moment and if Castlereagh and the others were just names to him, he knew enough of the Duke of Wellington and for that matter of the British soldiery to know that, once the hereditary enemy were in the field, there would be no holding them, at least, back. The Emperor knew an astonishing amount about England—but it was as if he knew it queerly, not so much wrongly as with such a distortion as you may see in certain mirrors that broaden you out, diminish you or turn you all askew. . . .

So that there he stood between, as it were, two beloved but irreconcilable forces—as if his father should conceive a hatred for Mr. Assheton Smith and Mr. Assheton Smith for Squire Feilding. To his father he owed loyalty—but what admiration to the other!

There came into his mind some verses—Pope, maybe, or more likely, Dryden:

“Less than a god, they said, there could not dwell  
Within the hollow of that shell  
That spoke so sweetly and so well. . . .”

Less than a godhead could hardly inhabit that frame that confronted him across the table—there were omnipotence, benevolence, humour, the lightning flash, all-knowledge, the power to exact awe, fear, affection, hatred and devotion to the death. In thousands of thousands of men! . . . But Gods have been slain! Gods have been slain! . . . And the unimpassioned face of the Duke of Wellington rose before his eyes.

Once, carrying a request for reinforcements, he had had to wait, mounted, for ten minutes, before the Duke could give him attention—on a hill, dominating a stretch of hilly territory. The Duke had sat motionless, smoke rose, lit with murky flashes; the thunder of cannon came up from the valleys. The plumes of the cocked hat did not stir, the cloak draped the rider to the saddle; the horse distended its nostrils but never stirred. . . .

And the boy had had the sense of a force that was neither human nor omnipotent—but superhuman and irremovable—and cold!

The Duke had said something, not very memorable, to an officer at his stirrup. Or rather, it had seemed not very memorable, because of the coldness of the tone and because in the same tone he had ordered that his servant lay out a meal for him, there beside his charger's hoofs.

It had been: "We have them on their left. The guns are in position. . . ."

He finally confronted the boy, unimpassioned, aquiline, slightly yellowish in complexion because he had lately suffered from an affection of the liver resembling jaundice; his eyes thin-lidded and cold.

"Tell your general," he said, "that I have no reinforcements to send him. I cannot manufacture troops. He must hold his position. Vaillant will be withdrawing troops from in front of you for his left. . . ."

He said to the officer at his stirrup:

"Better put that in writing. This boy is young!" He had added to the boy, as if speaking from a great height:

"You will find that their attack, when you return, has sensibly slackened if it have not ceased altogether!"



It had frequently since occurred to Feilding to wonder why the Duke should have addressed those words to him. He was of no importance; there could be no reason for the Duke to deign to reassure him. . . . But it was no doubt in that way that great commanders spread their reputation for infallibility, the subalterns and recruits saying one among another such words as: "I heard the Duke say this or that: and it came true! Trust the Duke!"

As a matter of fact it had not come strictly true, for, on returning to his corps, he had found the enemy cavalry in among the guns and his own squadron almost annihilated. . . . Yet it had been near enough, for soon after the whole enemy forces had been in retreat, owing probably to the pressure on their left. So that if the Duke's prediction had not been exactly fulfilled it had been because the enemy had been too slow in communicating their orders for retreat. That had been hardly the Duke's fault.

At any rate the Duke remained for the boy a bronze statue and implacable.

How different from the Demi-God before him, who exhibited merely a kindly somnolence till it suited him to throw his lightnings or employ his indefatigable industry! He imagined a confrontation of the two—Napoleon all bonhomie, vivaciousness, geniality and persuasion—or for the matter of that threatening. And the other cold—snake-cold, laconic, icily penetrating. . . . Death against Hercules, from the Alcestis!

Dogged endurance, the cold patience of the snake, are admirable qualities—are usually irresistible. But there will at times arise in men a flame of passion, as coming from



the godhead, that will overwhelm almost all things. He remembered in the Peninsular having watched two men fighting insanely. French cuirassiers had been driven back on a long front. There could have been no other French within a quarter of a mile—but a French corporal or cuirassiers as if insane had gone on in an unending attack on a trooper John Hance, with George Feilding and his squadron watching and cheering. . . . Naturally only for a minute or two!

The Frenchman on a rather light horse, reined in or let out, snorting, his sabre flashing—in a sunlit valley off the Sierras, John Hance revolving his cart-horse with hardly more than a pressure of the knee. Once he even used the back of his rein-hand to wipe his streaming brows, the Frenchman having recoiled to charge again. . . .

Naturally they—he—had had to stop the combat: they could not afford to lose John Hance who was an incomparable preparer of Spanish farmyard roosters for cocking contests, and unrivalled at the discovery of badgers, foxes and wolves for the officers' recreations. . . . No, they could not afford to lose John Hance, but Feilding could not help still regretting that he had never let that combat come to an issue.

He had sent four immense troopers to get between the Frenchman and Johnny, telling them not to hurt the cuirassier if they could help it—and that French fellow had swerved his horse aside within a hair's breadth of their stirrups and gone galloping over the valley bottom uttering singular yells of triumph and brandishing his sabre on high. . . . One of Ney's own men, no doubt!

Somehow Ney had a marvellous gift of inspiring his men with a breath of the mad godhead that inhabited his own body. . . . An incredible fellow, that Prince of the Moskwa whom Napoleon himself had called, after Friedland, the Bravest of the Brave, whom all women called *le beau sabreur*, but Madame de Frèjus, the Most Noble of the Noble! . . . And the spit of her husband! His double!

Stories of him filled the world. . . . But the one that had most impressed George Feilding had told how once, at the end of a battle—a victory—after he had had three horses killed under him and had been lost to sight, exhausted and at the end of his physical tether, he had been found, flogging the barrel of a cannon with the flat of his sword and uttering hoarse cries of exhortation. . . . Imagine Wellington in that occupation!

Imagine him indeed in the present situation of Napoleon!

They—the Expedition and Napoleon—were at that moment in a position of the gravest, the most excruciating peril and excitement. They were off Antibes and a small fort called St. Eustache—half way between the two. Six miles to the eastward were a line of battleships and a sloop; they themselves were five miles from the coast. Supposing the leviathan should take notice of their small flotilla; supposing she should even signal them? Supposing the forts at Antibes and St. Eustache should be garrisoned by men for the moment loyal to Louis XVIII. . . . Nay, Napoleon with his omniscience knew that the town of Antibes was under the command of the Marquis de Bevers—some name like that—an unshak-

able Royalist. . . . The commander of the fort might be of the other persuasion. If not and the battleship detected them they must in these light and shifting airs run ashore, under the guns of the fort or near it, and probably under fire from the line of battle ship that sailed at least six knots to their five. . . . A position, surely, of the gravest peril.

Yet there sat Napoleon on a red velvet couch; somnolent after his bottle of wine; his hands crossed over his stomach, for all the world like a traveller in the inn-parlour of a sleepy country town, awaiting the London mail! Chatting with an unknown subaltern!

Wellington would surely have shown more signs of vigilance, of care, of remorselessness, probably. Obviously, if you thought about it, on the occasion when he, Feilding, had watched him, Wellington's position had been as much a case of tip and run as was Napoleon's at that moment. He had in front of him a considerably greater force of French; his reserves were exhausted—that came out in the carefully calculated impatience of his: "Does he think that I can make troops!" his own left could hardly hold together and all that he had to tell him that the enemy's left and centre were being forced back was some smoke arising amongst distant trees, beyond the valley. . . . That, perhaps, could only come from his guns advancing. . . . But, even at that, woodlands are not very propitious for artillery!

Well, Wellington had appeared vigilant, snake-like and cold. No doubt, were he in Napoleon's now position, he would appear the same. It was a question of the complexion of commanders. No doubt when between and upon

the decks Perducet announced to the anxious troops: "*Hé compères*, the Emperor is taking a refreshing nap!"—a suppressed cheer would run among their heads and communicate itself to the rest of the flotilla. They would say: "There is no danger. The Emperor allows himself to nap. He has all things prepared. *Quel homme!*"

That suited his troops who required to repose on the magnetism of a godhead. On the other hand for Wellington's troops it was necessary that they should feel how he, watching over Israel, remained ceaselessly at attention. Napoleon, led by his star, had all things prepared for him; Wellington must be vigilant, to watch the turn of the moment. The one was a seer, the other incomparably competent!

And their rank and file were as different.

It had been singular and engrossing to the young man to come against, to be, as it were, buried, under French troops of all arms. He had been up against them on campaign—but there you had seen little of them except an occasional prisoner, sullen or vainglorious—or a bear-skinned line of dark blue advancing, head deep in smoke—or in groups, once or twice, in amongst the scarlet and pipe-clay!

But remembering his own men at leisure, recumbent usually and except when there was badger-baiting or cocking or a round or two with the maulies—for they contrived those field sports wherever they went!—they came back to him as usually silent and unoccupied. But between and above these decks there was perpetual movement! Men played cards; they played dice; they recounted their exploits; they discussed politics with violent

gestures of the wrists and hands; they carved their ration bones into boats, spoons or camels to send for remembrance to their children; they wrote letters to their mothers. Older men would get into the corners of gun-carriages and read begrimed newspapers, or go over proclamations they had copied out, correcting them. It was intensely interesting to hear them talk of their past battles or to mark the clearness of their views of public matters.

There again it was Wellington against the Emperor. You could no more imagine talking to a British trooper than you could imagine yourself finding entertainment from the conversation of the Duke. It was not a case of all work and no play. . . . The Duke took his hounds with him wherever they could be got until he finally left them at St. Jean de Luz. . . .

Count Bertrand came down the companion. He reported to the Emperor that Fort Antibes appeared to be garrisoned. By means of a good glass you could perceive guns and men with bayonets lounging against them. For Fort Eustache he could not answer. The line of battleship did not as yet appear to have perceived them. She was holding on her course which might carry her to Sardinia.

"Then we must make for Frèjus," the Emperor said. "We should make that place by nightfall or soon after."

Count Bertrand answered: "Not before the dawn, Sire. The wind falls every minute!"

Napoleon said: "Be it so. My star will doubtless influence wind and tide for my good. If we arrived at nightfall we could not land till dawn and it is as well that we should not have the appearance of hanging off the coast!"



He added: "*Mon bon Bertrand!*" indulgently, and the Count withdrew.

Napoleon looked across at the boy with a little malice: "My Lieutenant," he said, "you have no doubt not had the chance to read the papers of the Delicate Inquiry into the Conduct of the Princess of Wales, for they were kept secret. But my agents procured them for me. . . ." He had read them with amazement tempered with envy. For that a ruler like the Prince Regent could retain his throne—or his Regency—in whose Court, and in whose very bed, for the matter of that, such irregularities could be alleged to have taken place, must be a matter of envy to all other monarchs who had to maintain more rigid decorums in their Courts, their Consorts and themselves!

The Delicate Inquiry, George knew, had been an investigation by Ministers into the conduct of the Princess of Wales. But the Inquiry had taken place in secrecy at the time when he had been a mere child. . . . But Napoleon knew that the subject of the commission had been the alleged pregnancy of the Princess by a Captain Mauby at a time when she had been already separated from her husband. . . . And the Emperor was sardonically amused by the evidence of a maid called, as he remembered it, Sarah By God. That, he said gloatingly, left no doubt that the Prince Regent had suborned her and a Sir and Lady Campbell to falsely allege his own dishonour. Imagine *that!* And he animadverted for long as to the Prince's subsequent cruelty to his daughter, the Princess Charlotte, in depriving her of the society of her mother.

"My good young man," said he, "it shall not be long



before of a winter evening entering the Tuileries you may be witness of a very different spectacle—in my retiring room before my hearth-fire, myself and *my* consort come in after long inspection of the peaceful industries of our fellow-citizens and friends—for ‘subjects’ I will not call them. . . . Then before the fire, with my son the King of Rome at my knee, you shall see a domesticity very different!”

## CHAPTER SIX

**H** E contrived to be in at the death at most of the happenings to that small cortège whilst it remained small, in the land of grey olives, queer, bare, black vine stumps, pot-herbs, rocks and sunlight—up into the foothills of the Alps, that is to say, and as far as Lyons.

Afterwards he regretted—as we all do now and again—that he had kept no diary. He had not even any notes. All that he kept of that expedition he found in Paris at the bottom of his valise—a small eagle in bronze that his servant had procured for him, a brass regimental tab of the Polish Contingent, and a dry, small twig of olive wrapped in two copies of Napoleon's proclamations in his own handwriting. The proclamations differed, one being addressed to the peasantry, one to the Army. . . .

"Frenchmen!" the one began, "the defection of the Duke of Castiglione delivered up Lyons without defence to our enemies"; and "Frenchmen! in my exile I heard your complaints and your wishes. You demand that government of your choice which alone was legitimate. . . ."

The other: "Soldiers! We were not conquered: two men risen from our ranks betrayed our laurels, their country, their prince, their benefactor." It went on: "Those whom, during twenty-five years, we have seen traversing all Europe to raise up enemies against us . . . shall *they* pretend to command and control our eagles?" Or again: "Tear down those colours from your persons—those

colours that the nation has proscribed and which for twenty-five years served as a rallying signal to all the enemies of France; mount the tricoloured cockade: you bore it in the days of our greatness! Who shall be master over us? Who shall have it in his power?"

They read a little lifeless, those phrases, when he found them in his room in the rue du Bac with the thunder of the cannon of the Allies, after Waterloo, sullenly shaking the window frames. . . . But if you could have heard them falling from *his* lips in the Gulf of Juan, the lips of the small man in dark blue, by the intense blue of the Mediterranean, with the troops in all makes of uniforms, standing, squatting over tubs or on their hams, beneath the silver grey of the olives, on the thin carpet of needles beneath the dark pines, or beneath the bright and hyacinthine skies—their pencils raised to take down those thunderbolts of words. . . . Ah, that would have been different!

But in the tall, gloomy slice of a room at the bottom of the rue du Bac with its glimpse of the remorselessly flowing Seine and the grey, dispassionate Tuileries, those petitions had been dim enough. The pencil-writing was already faded, one of them was rubbed and stained by the olive twig that it had enwrapped. He had left twig and papers lying on the flap of his *escritoire* and there they had lain when, two days later, the two captains of his regiment, stiff and formal in their scarlet and pipe-clay and stocks had come in coldly to arrest him. . . . It was infinitely strange and disturbing to him to see again his own uniform and the stiffness of these two men who moved as if they had been wooden soldiers because of the formality of their

errand, which was disagreeable to them. And he could have laughed hysterically to see the unanimity of their movements once one of them had had scent of those Petitions. They positively ejaculated sounds of astonishment and each, with immensely long black pantaloons strapped beneath the boot, long-tailed scarlet coats and great black shakos decorated with blobs of wool, leaned over the flap of the *escritoire* reading with moving lips. Each had the tiniest of whiskers—mere prolongations of the hair beside their ears. One of them said:

“You perceive: it is in his own handwriting!”

The other got no further than to exclaim: “I protest . . .”

One of them supported himself on the flap of the *escritoire* with his right hand, holding in his left the sword he had taken from the young man; the other supported himself with his left. They had thus an admirable balance. The one on the left twisted in his fingers the little olive twig, the boy watching it with anxious eyes.

He was singularly conscious that on the copy of the proclamation to the French civilian population was the note: “Copy of the Emperor’s Proclamation, made for distribution by me, George Feilding, Gulf of Juan, March 1st. Duly distributed at Gap on March 5th on the march to Grenoble.” On the other he had pencilled: “Distributed at Grenoble, March 7th.”

He commented to himself grimly that there are occasions when it is well not to take notes. This was one of them! He was under arrest charged with desertion and having comforted one of his Majesty’s enemies, Bonaparte, to wit!

He cared very little about that; but he was in despair because at that moment he should have been meeting Madame de Frèjus at the southern gate of the Little Luxembourg, in a spot called the Closerie des Lilas where they could walk unobserved and freely discuss what they had been discussing . . . the question of Hélène's divorce from Frèjus. His Hélène had demanded those three days for reflection and possibly for confidences with the kind, tall Princesse de la Moskwa, to whose protection she had retreated to be out of hearing of her husband's imprecations.

The officer, toying with the olive twig, flipped it across his comrade's back towards the empty fire-place. At the start that Feilding made to pick it up, both of them sprang round, their hands on their sabres. He would rather have parted with his life than with that twig and he was determined that only with life itself, if then, should it depart from him. For it was an omen—all the omen of peace that life seemed to have left him. . . .

An omen! All other days and events of that time he might perhaps forget, but the occasion of his finding that little branch he would for ever preserve in his mind.

“And seeing it, I took it in my hand  
And said: ‘This shall a token stand,  
‘That in short time my woes shall cease  
‘And love shall crown my pains with peace!’”

. . . or words to that effect, had been part of an old song his mother had been used to sing when he was young. A sad woman, he never knew why, she would, in winter dusks and other mournful twilights, open her clavier and the long music books with their faded yellow papers and

would sing melancholy, yearning songs that her mother, and possibly her grandmother, had sung before her. . . .  
Such as:

"When with neglect, the lover's bane, poore maids rewarded be,  
The only refuge from their pain is but a wreath from thee!"

That however had been to the willow tree, not the olive.

He could hardly remember more than that of his mother, a pale, silent woman, who nevertheless at times could erect herself and pour out upon his always deferential father, vials of contempt and wrath that would have cowed the son, for life. . . . He remembered, the last of them when he had been fourteen or rising fifteen, when, for a festive season, the house had been full of French *émigrés*, with Hélène whom he was taught to regard as his cousin and her father the Marquis whom he never regarded as his uncle. George had been making some rough horseplay of kissing the child under the mistletoe, in which Hélène, as less inured to English habits, had resentfully opposed him—in the great hall under a bunch of that parasitic plant as large as a four bushel measure. . . . The servants had been lighting the sconces amongst the holly and yew round the great hall, his mother superintending them because she had a great dread of fire and feared the candles might catch in the dry yew needles. . . . Hélène had come into the dusky hall, a fair child dressed all in white, to watch the lighting of the candles. He had pounced upon her and dragged her, resisting and uttering words of fright and reproof, under the great bunch that had only just been hauled into place.



In the scuffle his mother's hand had gripped his left wrist with the strength of mania and he had been dragged and jerked into an unused still-room that gave onto the hall—a very large closet that had lockers all round it.

She had whirled him, staggering, into a corner of the lockers, having ejaculated: "Stay there! Stay there! Son of your father!" He supposed he could have resisted her, but she had great strength at any rate for the moment, and he was afraid. She had paced the place—nine steps—backwards and forwards till his father came, smiling, ruddy-skinned, blue-eyed, hawk-nosed, tall and clean—in his long blue coat with the golden buttons and the long white trousers with straps, and his iron-grey hair shining.

She had assailed him at once in cold, virulent, broken French. His father knew French apparently to perfection, but the boy knew nothing but oaths and ejaculations he had picked up from marquises and viscounts. So he had gathered nothing of what they had said. His father had obviously expressed some concern at first until at the word "mistletoe" he had laughed and said:

"Oh, *gui, gui!* . . . The French for mistletoe is *gui*," and he added, "That, my dear, puts an entirely different construction on it!" His mother had broken down into English. She had said that if the whole swarm were not sent packing that evening she would straightway walk out of the house.

His father had said: "My dear, you can have the coach and six. But what good would that do? I cannot expel the best blood in Europe. . . ."

She had burst in with denunciations . . . of the best blood in Europe! She had said that the Marquis de

Dinart-Périgord would sell his—something that the boy could not understand—for a twenty-pound note; his nephews the Marquis and Viscount de Clermont-St. Cyr-Brion made their livings by the sale of loaded dice; the Comte de Fronsac-Leoville by the manufacture of clothes pegs, Monsieur de Beau-jeu by teaching the Jesuit *botte* and other foul strokes with the duelling sword. . . . She recited these things with vehemence, but with calculation. It was difficult to reconcile her with the silent lady who in twilight dusks sang mournful love songs. But at the time of his mother's funeral, which had taken place before lambing-time that same winter or early spring, the boy had gathered from the servants that his mother had been consumed by a cold flame of passion—a *bachendiaoullilion*, said the servants who in that border county often spoke a bastard Welsh—for his father. But the Squire had been "gay."

"Gay" was not the word George would have applied to his father, who was nevertheless bright-haired, equable, extremely cynical and indeed frightening. He spoke with extreme clearness, every second or third sentence containing a quotation from Tully, Quintus Horatius Flaccus or Dares and Dictys. He was also an incomparable performer of the violin in his private rooms and he had an insupportable contempt for fools, whether born or not. . . . Squire Feilding was in short no Squire Western, bawling drunk about his acres after the hounds. He had sojourned much abroad and carried his liquor with a stern gravity; after the third bottle his speech would usually be as slow and distinct—and wounding—as when he was stone sober. It took him in the legs, of course, but

he would sit erect at the head of his board, even snuffing the candles in a nearby branch with accuracy, till all his guests, their neckties loosened, were safely under the table. Then Camp would conduct him safely to bed.

No, he was no Squire Western. He kept his hounds, of course, with a cold efficiency rather than with enthusiasm, but Nimrod himself had admired his casting; and his view-halloas and gone-aways, which sounded singularly low and unconcerned when you were near him, penetrated nevertheless to the furthest corners of the pack and the field, with a bell-like ululation. The cry of wolves on moonlight nights which he had heard in the Pyrenees had often sounded to the boy like the voice of his father encouraging his hounds. . . .

They had sent him for that holiday season to his uncle, whose estate was next to that of no less a person than Jack Mitton himself. In spite of that he had at first felt aggrieved at being deprived of the society of Hélène de Dinart whom he had just begun to find a comrade of some spirit in field exploits—at least after the hounds or up a tree.

He had indeed, from his uncle's, written her a letter in which he had intended to express a sort of clumsy devotion, but it had taken him three days to write and in the two days intervening before his fair copy Mr. Mitton next door had performed two of his most famous feats: he had jumped his hunter, in and out, over two chaises containing elderly couples on the turnpike, from the roadside sward, and he had gone duck-shooting in the buff over the Christmas ice. In the buff—stark naked—he had stalked duck

by moonlight on the ice and had brought back three couples.

So George Feilding had seen his first demi-god—and his first letter to his Hélène had ended up by being one long panegyric of that hero. There was about that something symbolic. He remembered to have concluded his letter: "Is not this a man in whose service one could lay down one's life and more!"

The olive branch, however, he had found in an olive-field between the ruined amphitheatre of Frèjus and the shore of Golfe Juan, whilst the Emperor sat on a great olive bole and ruminated somnolently. It was five o'clock of the evening and the dusk already falling. The small town of Frèjus into which the young man had walked, had seemed completely empty. Windows covered with *violets*, doors sealed up, no smoke issuing from the chimneys of such hovels as had them. . . . In effect the rumour had spread from Antibes that Algerine marauders had landed on the coast and all the inhabitants had fled to the mountains or to Cannes to give the news. And Napoleon sat there irresolute. So sadly indeed had the young Feilding walked within the field. . . . His mother's song had commenced with the words:

"Sadly I walked within the field to see what comfort it might yield,  
And, as I went my weary way an olive branch before me lay. . . ."

And there indeed had lain the olive branch. Inexplicably! It had seemed inexplicable to this boy used to the ob-

servation of trees and their boughs because the leaves upon it were quite fresh, and the cicatrice where the branch had been torn away from the great parent tree fresh too. He was accustomed enough to fields of olives to know that after great winds it is not unusual to find twigs torn from the grey-green whispering trees and lying on the ground. Indeed, on the sparse herbage of the clayey soil lay many such little twigs, dry whisps. But there had been no storms for a month past and of the light winds of the last fortnight they had had sufficient evidence in the slowness of their voyage. . . . But this branch had its leaves fresh. . . .

No doubt it had been torn from its trunk by one of the mounted officers—a Pole as likely as not—whom Napoleon had sent to reconnoitre the country for six miles round. No doubt an olive branch, whipping in the dawn into the face of a mounted officer, might incite him to grasp it and the onward walk of the horse would tear it out. But that boy whose extreme dejection had already set him humming his mother's song, had insisted in seeing an omen in the appearance . . . an omen that in short time his woes would cease and love submerge his dejection in tranquillities. . . .

For he was indeed dejected.

His day he had begun actively enough to keep thoughts of his Hélène out of his head, splashing ashore before dawn from the *Inconstant's* pinnace, which followed closely the longboat containing the Emperor and his marshals. The smaller vessels had been just beached, the troops springing from the bulwarks like heavy drops from fountains.



The young man had awaited a great outburst of eloquence when his foot touched the soil of his realm. But when Napoleon had come up the sand with a rolling motion and stood on hard soil, he gave two kicks with his right leg and two with his left, to unlimber his feet, and remarked to Count Bertrand:

"So there is an end of the Congress of Vienna!" Then he had begun to hasten the departure of a detail that was going to take possession of the Forts of St. Eustache and Antibes. They were twenty-five men under the orders of an elderly and sagacious lieutenant of infantry—each man picked by the Emperor himself as being physically impressive but not very sound, yet with enthusiasm, loyalty and powers of persuasion as great as could be. In addition they were tricked out in the best that the Force had to show in the way of appurtenances. If another man had a better bearskin than one of that detail he must make it over and the same with packs, muskets, bandoliers and boots. The Emperor had spent the last daylight hours on board the *Inconstant* in making over that small force. . . . And he was at it again himself with a lanthorn, examining each man before the dawn.

That, in effect, was Napoleon, as the young man saw him. His mind was always on the minds of his enemies; his eyes always open for details of the smallest. With his mind's eye there, he saw only a great table with all his enemies from Wellington to Metternich and the obtuse kings and semi-imbecile emperors seated around it: and he saw them springing apart as if at the falling of a grenade in their midst—their expressions of rage, horror, terror, consternation or of lugubrious and grotesque



spleen. But his acting mind was equally set on his next step—which was the taking of the fort and port of Antibes.

For that, the men he sent and at whose coming he believed that the garrison would desert to his colours, must present an aspect of soldierly exactitude and trimness of uniform, not because of any vanity, but because they were to be taken as samples of his army. More than twenty-five he could not send because he could not spare them from his small force. . . . When he landed he had 700 men of his Old Guard, 300 Elbans and Corsicans and 140 Poles.

So the Emperor by lanthorn-light went amongst those men, adjusting a bearskin here, tightening a pack strap there, pinching now and then an ear or whispering an injunction to some old, grizzled man. For all the world he might again have been their Little Corporal.

His final injunction to the old captain in command the boy did not hear. He was engaged in frantically making his servant saddle and caparison one of the six horses that they had brought with them. But from that adventure nothing but mortification had resulted. The small detail had thundered on the gates of the fortress in the early light, but instead of the gates being opened and a fraternization taking place between the veterans of the Detail and such veterans of Napoleon's as should be within, the gates had remained forbiddingly closed whilst the guard sent to apprise the governor.

Ordinarily the gates should have been opened at that hour, and the manœuvre might have succeeded. But the lights and noises of the disembarkation had sent flying through all the department that rumour of the coming of

North African pirates. So, upon hearing the errand of the Detail, the sergeant of the guard sent to warn the commander of the garrison—one General Gordin or Gorsin: the young Feilding could not exactly remember the name.

There at last came the sound of the footsteps of many men from beyond the barrier and low cries of command, and already the Captain commanding the detail began to be aware of what was coming and warned the young Feilding to take himself and his horse to a greater distance, for the horse, being one of only six, was of great value to the Emperor. Thus, when two lines of infantry came running from the gates that were cast suddenly open, the young man was at sixty yards or so of distance. He saw the infantry disarm the Emperor's men without so much as a word spoken, for there must have been two hundred of the Royalist troops and their officers held pistols to the heads of such as spoke.

That General Gorsin was what the Scots called a cannie man and the young Feilding had nothing but mortification from an interview that he then had with him. For the light coming up upon the towers and spires of the little town, the Detail, now unarmed and surrounded by the garrison troops wearing their white cockades, had marched within the gates; and the gates being nearly closed the general appeared within the aperture and asked the young man who he was. The boy answered that he was an officer of His Britannic Majesty's Monmouthshire cavalry.

"That I perceive," the general answered dryly, "I have fought against squadrons of yours," and he asked the young man his errand, and whether he were on service. The young man answered that he was not upon service

but was there to observe the methods and steps taken in the recovery of his lawful throne by the Emperor.

“ . . . whose cockade you yourself once wore!” the boy added hotly, for his heart was sore at the sight of those men of his Demi-God’s, disarmed and led away. Moreover he was possessed by the idea that by the use of his single tongue he might turn this victory into a defeat for the Royalists.

“Those are strange words from one of your cloth to one of mine,” the general said, and, glancing upwards, the young man perceived that from each of the four embrasures that immediately confronted him there pointed at his heart the shining, ring-like muzzles of four muskets apiece.

His skin prickled all over and rage suddenly sent the blood to his head.

“That is all one with your conduct,” he shouted, “Monsieur le Général, to train muskets upon the officer of a friendly power, as to turn your coat. One like the other is an act unbecoming . . .” and, leaning his right hand over, he lightly tapped the hilt of his sabre.

“Why, there are more ways of killing a dog than one,” the general said. “I should be loath to bring diplomatic troubles upon my sovereign by shooting an Allied officer; but, believe me, I shall shoot you like a dog if you continue to bawl treason to my sovereign—and to yours!—at my gates. For myself, my conscience is clear. I kept my oath to my Emperor whilst he remained with us: when he abandoned us I took to my king and to France an oath that I shall keep. For you, I counsel you to come within these walls and abandon the crackbrain enterprise of this

mock Emperor. You are a young, inexperienced man. I do not know what motives account for your presence here but for one of your profession you seem to me to be in very parlous company."

"General," the boy said, "I would rather die than come within your walls."

The General retreated within the opening of the gates.

"Then," he said, "there is no more to be said. This country is as free to you as to me. Only I warn you that if you try to shout treason to my men upon the walls they will shoot you at the first word." And he disappeared within the gates that swung irresistibly and heavily to.

At the sight a certain panic descended on the boy. He was aware that the words he had uttered might well seem treasonable. And treasonable enough they seemed afterwards at the Court Martial when, with his sabre on the table before him and the dry, formal officers behind it, he had to listen to General Gorsin's remarkably accurate and dispassionate repetition of this conversation. It proved damning.

For he had had no time even so much as to allege that he was a prisoner on parole to the Emperor, nor indeed had he had any opportunity at all of pointing out that he considered his country to be at peace with France and the Emperor. He had merely talked treason to Louis XVIII.

So there he sat his horse with twelve muskets pointing at his heart—uniformed, booted, spurred, sabred and all. In his rage he could hardly restrain himself from shouting to the soldiers above exhortations to cast away their white cockades and mount the tricolour. They might fire

at him and, though he was confident that he could so manage his horse as to escape their bullets, still they were fairly certain to hit the horse itself—and it was Count Bertrand's own Arab mare, and horses were precious to the expedition. One has besides an instinctive shrinking from exposing a blood mare to almost certain laceration by bullets. So, although he had still the strongest possible inclination to take that fort single-handed, he rode away at last through the pine forests.

Thus he himself was the bearer of that bad news to the Emperor, and there could be little doubt as to the perturbation it caused in the Imperial entourage. The Emperor himself burst into a rage, stamping his feet and asking who was this General Gordin or Gorsin, and said little more. But from the perturbed faces of Bertrand and the others it was obvious that the blow was a severe one. They had undoubtedly counted on having the port and fortress of Antibes as a base. And with some reason, for of the four hundred veterans that Napoleon had sent from his Elba army into France to prepare the way—the three that had been sent to Antibes had reported the garrison as being perfectly ready—when the Violet reappeared—to cast away their Royalist emblems, and the townspeople, owing to the gloomy pride and arrogance of the Marquis who ruled them in the king's name, as yearning to re-exchange the lilies of the Bourbons for the bees of the Emperor.

All this had been foiled by the dogged coolness of that General Gorsin. And so important did the possession of that place seem to them that they debated whether they should not take the little fort of St. Eustache which had



been found after all to be dismantled. There they might have mounted the guns that they had and so establish some sort of base. . . .

But they decided to see if they could not, by means of another expedition, reduce the town by fair words. For it was essential that no French blood should be shed at this stage or at any other of the expedition. But a scout that they sent with this second detail with orders to watch from the fringes of the wood, came back with the news that the second unit had fared even as the first. And then they sent an officer alone who had been a bosom friend of General Gorsin's and might be counted on to show him the light of reason. But that officer—of artillery—never came back either.

Of these disasters the troops knew nothing; for them the details were just details like others. They were told to rest themselves for a long night march, and they bivouacked very contentedly, sprawling—across a vineyard and an olive orchard—contentedly enough round their soup-cauldrons and drinking their wine of which half a bottle had been served to each man. They were unconcerned. They would march if the service demanded it, but they would rather sprawl on the ground; the rest was in the hands of Corporal Violet.

But upon the boy great dejection had settled. It seemed to him impossible that the Emperor and his staff could have no alternative plan, yet they seemed to have none. The Colonel-Count dei Gatti di Vivario, now with his sword-hand restored to use, exclaimed, spitting with fury, that certain of the officers were in favour of defiling the graves of their mothers by counselling a return to Elba.



He was by now again truculently and cheerfully friendly with the boy, but his news brought George Feilding no great cheer; and for the whole afternoon the Emperor sat apart on his olive bole, his arms crossed, his head bent so that his face was hidden by his great hat.

So that the boy saw his first great adventure gone all to ruin; his chief demi-god cast down, himself no doubt disgraced. . . . And what would his Hélène do then? He imagined her jeering at him for his folly; regarding him as a cock with his crest cut—and no game-cock at that. And he imagined her exposed to horrible perils in case, the enterprise failing, the vengeful Allies should besiege Elba and root out Napoleon and his court.

So he desired with all the strength of his being to regard the olive branch as an omen torn by the god from its parent trunk and cast before his feet in the stillness of evening. And indeed it seemed so. For no sooner did he take a twig of the branch in his hand than bugles began to blow the fall in and the Emperor was on his feet watching his men dressing in line amongst the dry, small trunks of the vines.

He delivered a tremendous oration. The eagles were about to set themselves in motion. At midnight they would precipitate themselves into that France whose arms were stretched out to them.

In the pale sky of the north-west hung Venus beside the moon, wavering and welling out. He pointed to it his right hand that had a ghostly pallor against the background of the darkening olive foliage.

"Fellow soldiers and comrades in glory!" he exclaimed. "Behold my star shines over Paris!"

There was never such cheering before on the shores of Cap Juan as then arose.

"You never can tell," Gatti di Vivario grumbled afterwards between his teeth. "I wonder whether he kept us kicking our heels until a plan had occurred to him. Or whether all that was planned from far back. You never can tell with our man. All that you can tell is that he is always right and as fortunate as if he directed the planets in their courses. If he has a need for a star, a star will be there in his service."

Cries of "To Paris!" continued till far into the night. For whenever two or three of the troops came together on their errands they would set it up. It was splendid again to see bivouac fires upon the trunks of trees.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

SO there, slowly, on a pensive horse at the head of a column, in the starlight, he had his desire. He was on a hard, smooth road—the creation of Napoleon; beneath the branches of plane trees, the plantings of Napoleon; marching through Napoleon's land, with the dust raised by the advance of Napoleon's long column shot through with the dust of light from the great planets that shone through the plane-branches. . . . The stars in their courses! Surely they fought for Napoleon . . . and in a way for George Feilding, who now had peace in his heart. Or that, maybe, was caused by the olive branch. . . . Some special providence had provided for him that magic night beneath the splendour of the Milky Way, the black-purple of the serrated little olive hills on the right, on the left the sense of the quietly lapping Mediterranean. They were to go from triumph to triumph and love should crown his pains with peace. Surely nothing could be denied to one who had ridden in that *chevauchée*!

It had been one in the morning before they were on the hard road, though the head of the expedition had started at midnight; but the guns delayed them. They were hauled to the roadside by the sailors and fishermen of the flotilla. The artillerymen would have done it better, but the Emperor would not have them fatigued at the out-

set of the day, for if the column were set upon, the artillerymen would need all their agility to serve those pieces. So the clumsy monsters at the end of long ropes floundered in the sand of the vineyards, waddled up over and down banks and at last came to the road. They had found one or two mules in stables in the deserted township, but not enough for the guns, so they were used for hauling the ammunition and treasure chests and the sutler's wagon and the like.

So, with a little rumbling, but not so much, they proceeded as if in a reverie between the hills and the sea. It was noticeable that whilst the night lasted the other ranks, if they spoke at all, neither jested nor laughed and the officers talked in low tones as if they went in awe of the spirit of the country which they were invading. They were set a very leisurely pace and they halted and fell out very often, lying by the roadside, those that were mounted descending to ease their horses, and the Emperor walking along the lines of reclining men and conversing with them about their personal affairs—where they had left their wives and children and how much money they would need to live at home in their own *pays* now that they were bringing peace to the world. The reason for this leisurely progress was that in the first place the men, who had of necessity done little route marching in the tiny island, should come gradually into it; and then there would have been no sense in arriving at Cannes before the morning was a little advanced. A triumph seen from a bedroom lattice loses half its lustre. The inhabitants must be awake and abroad.

It happened that in falling out some of the men came

upon a fellow asleep by the roadside who must have been middling drunk when he fell asleep since he was still too muddled to speak much when they shook him awake. At first he was frightened of having fallen into the hands of corsairs, but he soon came to and in a boastful mood exclaimed:

"You are no corsairs. I maintained to Nicholas and Jerome and the gravedigger that I would eat all the corsairs I found upon this road." That was the first man they had seen since they landed and it was the first inkling they had had that they had been taken for Algerines. He spoke at first to the Emperor himself with great boastfulness about what he had said to Jerome and Nicholas and the rest; but when a lanthorn was brought and the light fell on the great hat, the mantle with collar carelessly turned up, and, when that fell back, upon the white intent face, he stiffened very slowly, standing petrified for a long while, and then cried out:

"The Little Corporal! Death of my life, the Little Corporal!" It became visible that he had only one arm. He had lost the other as far back as the taking of Toulon, when Napoleon had commanded the siege guns and had been only Bonaparte. The Emperor talked with him for a long time, but in low tones and in the barbarous patois of Nice so that George Feilding could neither hear nor make anything out of what they said. And at last the fellow darted from the road and ran halloing up a path through the vines that only he could see—and from the serrations of the little hills for a long time they could hear him bawling:

"Ohé, Nicolas; ohé, *le fossoyeur*; ohé, M. le Curé!"

and continuing that the Emperor was come back with a hundred thousand troops and the good times were returned.

In the light of the lanthorn that was now on the ground the white hands of the Emperor were seen to rub themselves together. He called out briskly to Count Bertrand to fall in the troops and that they must have music, and it all became a great bustle, the bandsmen unshipping their instruments, the drummers tuning against the damp of the coming dawn, for the sky behind them was already white. A little advance guard of the tallest grenadiers was detailed to precede the Emperor. Then came Napoleon a-slouch on his grey charger with Bertrand on his right and Drouet on his left, both erect silhouettes on bay horses, looking black against the light, and a mounted bugler and, at an interval, Gatti di Vivario, being Quarter-master-General, and the young Feilding in his scarlet amongst the dark blue.

To the startling reverberation of drums, shafts of light flew across olives and vines from the hill-peaks of the dun and stony country: they had nearly a dozen little drummer boys; the fifes laughed and neighed, all the horses curvetting a little and moving sideways except the Emperor's. The light grew: what looked like tree stumps amongst the vines appeared as early peasants, petrified, watching with the dung-forks laden with dung and suspended. They had near two hundred cavalry, dismounted, but a dozen had their shining bugles with the embroidered bugle-cloths depending and the small details of the hill-tops became visible to the sound of their long, mournful, silver preludes. But it was to the sound of the



*Marseillaise* that the red sun came up behind them. The peasants and children came running down towards the road, leaping boulders, their arms in the air, springing across irrigation streams: innumerable children!

The drums again, the Imperial March, the drums, *Partant pour la Syrie*, the drums, artillery bugles from far down the column, the *Marseillaise*: a period of silent marching, but brisk, the cadenced rustling of innumerable feet. Children were running along beside Napoleon: for the first time in little trebles the cry of *Vive l'Empereur* sounded again across French vineyards. There was a boy with a flaxen poll and flashing teeth and eyes ran all the way level with his returned sovereign, to the first rush-thatched hovels of Cannes.

The bugler halted his horse; when the young Feilding came up to him he was bidden to ride for some paces beside the Emperor. His horse caracoled beside the Emperor's grey, which had a very slow pace in appearance so that it seemed like the oncoming of destiny, though indeed it exactly synchronized with infantry marching at the quickstep to the fife. Napoleon rode with his head down, forward upon his chest. You would have said he was a stricken man riding from a disastrous field, his grey overcoat covering his horse to the tail-strap. Upon his martingale was a plaque of gold that was embossed to show an eagle. He rode in silence for a long time, but his eyes glanced from right to left at the peasants running down the hills.

They came to the road-end of an avenue of palms and figs that ran up to a long white *mas* in the dark green pines backing on a red hillside. An old man on crutches,

a dozen children, a half a dozen raven-haired young women were at the roadside there. There were squares of extravagant green herbage, squares of extravagantly red earth, squares of vines with their minute tortured trunks beginning to show feathers of green. And all this profusion ran, in planted terraces whose grey-stone supporting walls were gay with foxgloves, valerian, green ferns or veiled with the pink sprays of almond blossoms—so that it was a joy.

Napoleon checked his horse at a point where you could see right up the avenue, and the bugler sounded the halt.

"This," he said suddenly to the young man, "is a domain of the Prince of the Moskwa. I gave him those date palms from amongst my own that I brought from Egypt. Yet he was the first to betray me." He let the reins fall on his horse's neck and dived with both hands deep into the pockets of his coat. "He was nevertheless the bravest man I have ever known. You have heard of Ney!"

As if it had not been wonder enough a new awe came upon the young man as he gazed at the white house with the grey, closed shutters on all the windows. It was incredible that one should see the very house of Ney!

A faint whimper of sound began from the young women; they took handfuls of children by the shoulder. A thin voice piped: "Long . . . live . . . the Emperor!" All their voices cried it. From the left of the road where it was marshier and last year's papyrus reeds made screens, it came in the bass of men's voices; heavy men with great hats, pushing aside the reeds, emerged with, on their shoulders, the great tools with which they laboured

the heavy earth. They cast their hats in the air as they ran awkwardly.

"You are astonished that they cry 'Long live the Tyrant,'" he said darklingly to the young man. "I will tell you!" He waved a hand to include all that fertility to the hilltops. "It is because when I first rode along this way all this was a desert. . . . It was I who planted those fig trees, it was I who planted those vines; it was I who gave prosperity to all this region and to all France. . . . I, Boney! I, the Corsican ogre. . . . You say that man is a benefactor to humanity who will make two blades of wheat grow where one grew before. . . . But I, where none were, made a million million to grow. . . . Would that your Pitt had been such another ogre!"

He began to throw small silver coins to the children to right and left of the road—with some profusion, scooping handfuls from either pocket; and a gold napoleon or two to the old man on crutches and a couple of old women in black.

"You will observe," he said with a grim humour, for he was still disturbed by the remembrance of Pitt, "they cheered before I threw them money, I am not one to throw much money to the populace, but to children I do it because they remind me of my son whom I soon shall see!"

There were children everywhere, marching by the roadside, holding their fists before their lips and tooting in imitation of buglers, or twining round the legs of the grenadiers who were standing easy. Some entreated to be allowed to carry the soldiers' packs; boys staggered under the weight of muskets that the men surrendered to them.

"It is, you perceive, a very warlike scene," Napoleon said. "You may observe how these people tremble before the tyrant!"

He made a motion with his hand and the bugler called the troops to attention; the click of the bayoneted muskets coming to the shoulder made a rustling run down the line like wind in ears of wheat.

"You may fall back when the march begins again," the Emperor said. "There is, I am informed very credibly, a considerable settlement of your countrymen in the town we are approaching. If they saw you at my side they would conclude that I was your prisoner and the report would spread through the country!" He added: "You will find if you talk to them that some are very much my friends. As I have told you!" He added again: "And no rabble neither. Philosophers of the wealthier sort who have learned of Diderot, Rousseau and the rest."

At the renewal of the *Marseillaise* the young man fell back beside Gatti di Vivario, who was rolling his eyes in an ecstasy of admiration, his horse prancing to the music.

"What a man!" he exclaimed. "*Ma ché uomo!* There is nothing of which he will not think!"

It was the playing of the *Marseillaise* that so excited his admiration.

For nothing could have done more to excite the enthusiasm and calm the fears of the countryside thereabouts. It was indeed a message saying that good times had come again.

In the old days Napoleon had not so loved that melody; now, under the Bourbons, when it was not only in disfavour but suppressed, it would at least bring balm to

the ears of a countryside that knew it as a strain of liberation from Italians, Austrians, Papists—who knew whom!—and so he availed himself of it. His music had been one long message, winding up the valleys in the little hills. The *Marseillaise* said liberty had come again; the Imperial March said that Napoleon was there; *Partant pour la Syrie*, that the Emperor was on the march to spread freedom through France to the world.

“For myself,” Gatti di Vivario said, “I am not so in love with freedom that I could not dispense with it. But as a message it is admirable. There is no detail that that man omits to attend to. It is that that gives security to troops and it is that that is the secret of our man’s genius. What is there that he does not know? He will talk to you with equal infallibility of medicine, of books, of the opera, of philosophy, of agriculture. . . . I have heard him during the peace of Amiens talk of turnips to an English landowner and tell the landowner more of them than the landowner himself knew. Yet it is the English who most notably cultivate that root. There was a philosophic traveller called Yong, Jung . . . I forget the name . . .”

“You will not tell me,” the young man said, “that it was by talking about carrots that the Emperor won the battle of Borodine.”

“That I would not be too sure of!” the Colonel-Count exclaimed vivaciously, “though I talked of turnips . . .” He said that by talking about turnips—by enjoining the culture of those roots—Napoleon had notably increased both the number and the girth of the cattle of France: so they had meat and troops well fed in infancy to supply cannon-food for their campaigns. Nay, more, the further



throughout the world you spread the culture of the turnip—into Germany, into Austria, into Russia herself—the more fields of well-fed cattle you found to plunder when you went campaigning.

“Why,” he concluded, “had Russia enjoyed for twenty-five years, like France, the rule of our little man, we should never have been driven out of Moscow by starvation!”

“It takes,” the young man said, “surely more than that to make a demi-god!”

“No, *mon lieutenant*,” the Colonel-Count said; “to make a god you must have omniscience and care in details. To make a half-god you may make do with half-omniscience, but your care in details you can never do without. I have seen Napoleon more incensed before Marengo because there was a lack of onions and potherbs for a stew for his Old Guard than over the biggest failure of one of his generals in the thick of a contest . . . and with reason, for the fault of a general you may remedy but you will win no battles when your men think themselves uncared for. If you care for their potherbs, they think the more by that token that you will care for their lives in the extreme hazard of combat.”

“But generalship, the qualities of the hero,” the boy said; “valour . . .”

“Why, there are generals that have more of generalship than he,” the other replied. “If you go by the rules of strategy and tactics Moreau was ten times the general that he is, yet very little was done upon the Rhine until the First Consul took things in hand. And if you elect for valour, why, he has enough. You have heard of him



at Toulon! I saw him there. Valour enough and too much. . . .”

He paused and then went on again:

“No, my young soldier. For generalship, for the compounding beforehand of the ingredients of attack or retreat by rule, there have been commanders more correct. . . . But, for the sense of a battle once it was engaged, and for the sense of nations and principalities before wars were joined. . . . He felt his battles as you feel the fingers of your hand. . . . You have told me of your Duke upon a hill seeing by smoke that Picton—or maybe not Picton—the guns at any rate were advanced into a new position. But I have seen Napoleon sit in the bottom of a valley with his back to a tree-trunk conversing with a farmer’s wench who had brought him water. And he would say: ‘Junot is there, or there. The guns are now across the river.’ Because he felt it in his blood or if you will because his star whispered to him. He alone could sit in a valley and have the sight of an eagle planing above the clouds. . . . And as with units of his forces so with the nations.”

Napoleon, the Corsican went rapturously on, could sit in the bottom of the Tuileries and say: “Now Pitt is meditating the declaration of war. Now the Emperor Alexander plots treason against me. Now Prussia stirs in conspiracies. Now Metternich’s itching palm is stretching towards the gold of England.” Or he could predict when the courage of Austria would fail, Prussia sue for peace or the Russian forces weary of fighting. He could feel it by his inner sense because he had within him the making of all men. A god is a god whether he be Jesus

or Beelzebub—or the little Corsican—because he participates in the nature of all mankind.

The boy said that he had not thought Napoleon's Quartermaster-General had been such a philosopher.

"Why," the Corsican answered, "when I was a boy and Napoleon little more, though to be sure he had then already left the town, Warenovius the Encyclopædist made a long sojourn in Corte, being out of favour with his government. And since I carried his letters and bargained for his cabbages or fish for him in the market he spoke to me often on matters of policy and the nature of mankind and the godhead, and he would read Voltaire and Fontenelle aloud whilst I plucked and trussed the fowls for his dinner and afterwards dictate his own works to me. So I was made acquainted, Quartermaster of the Forces as you see me now, in some way with the indulgences or malignancies of the Fates and with the folly of men."

He checked his horse, which had stepped by a neck ahead of the young man's.

"And surely it is a folly of men to seek to measure Napoleon with the inches of generalship, valour and the rest. As well seek to delimit the ocean's tides with a tape-measure. . . . Generalship! Valour!" He made with his right hand the gesture of rubbing a husk between his finger and thumb and casting it to the wind. The boy would not interrupt him, listening indeed with bated breath, for the Colonel-Count had the reputation of having lived all his life alongside one demi-god or another, and it was very seldom that he opened his lips. He passed for being an embittered man as being a Corsican and yet having risen no higher. But an uncontrol-

lable temper that at times overcame him had hindered his career. He began again:

"Generalship! Valour! They are cheap things. . . . It is necessary to have Fortune beside you in addition; but, if you elect to talk of valour, why he has enough, our man. You have heard of him at Toulon. As I said, I saw him there. Valour enough and too much. . . . I saw him watch an immense round English shell twisting and fizzling at his feet with the contempt of an eagle for a worm. . . . Valour! . . . He has belief in his star. . . . What is it but cold valour that he shows now, marching at a snail's pace before us for any Jacobin patriot or discontented soldier to shoot him from behind a tree? And there are those in this countryside! Why, you shall see him show valour enough! He is to go through a territory between here and Grenoble and the foothills of the Alps and so on to Lyons the proud. Well, when last he passed that way, going to Elba, whole populaces ran upon his carriage to tear him limb from limb where he sat unarmed." He stirred impatiently in his saddle and began again:

"Valour . . . that is for the mob. I have valour. Junot had it, Masséna, Marmont. Junot the madman perhaps above most. . . ."

"And the Prince of the Moskwa. . . ."

"Oh, Ney. Oh, Ney!" the other answered. "That is another story. . . . From Toulon I went into the Fourth Horse and was with him all through the campaign of the Rhine. . . . Oh, Ney was incomparable. Spotless! A paladin . . . but a simple soul. . . . Simple! Simple! If he saw the colour red opposed to him he would charge

it like a bull though it was Satan and all his legions that incarnadined the sky. . . . And mind you there are worse tactics than that of the sword in hand of that farrier's son. The son of a farrier—in Alsace. And a good son. I have known him when we were in the Fourth Horse together—aye, and afterwards—ride fifty miles to carry a dozen of eggs in winter to his father, eggs being scarce. . . . And sit obedient to him: I have seen that too, when he was a brigadier-general and I *maître d'armes*."

"But that," the boy asked, "does that suffice to make him a man of whom the whole world talks? For indeed if the whole world talks of the Emperor, part of them do so with abhorrence. But, though some say that Ney, like other Marshals of France, was cruel in warfare, there is no one that does not wonder at the Prince of the Moskwa as the bravest man in the world and the finest swordsman."

"Why," Gatti di Vivario said, "he is not so fine a swordsman as I. I have held him at bay by the quarter hour together and he could not touch me. But it is that same simplicity of mind as makes him obedient to his father that renders him invincible and adored. . . . You stood up to me once for five minutes and did more; but my mind was on other things. But if you had that Marshal charging down on you with his sword on high and his immense charger a-foam, your first impulse would be to fly, and even if you did not there would be half the fight lost and you would be dead before you knew it. Because his mind can never be upon more than one thing at once. . . . A simple soul," and the Corsican went on musingly to enumerate the qualities of Ney.

The long white *mas* they had lately passed was at once a symbol and a product of Ney. Napoleon had granted the estate to his Marshal because Ney was of such little avarice and of such translucent honesty that he was a relatively poor man amongst the Marshals. Ney had brought it to its pitch of fertility because he was a simple peasant as intent on the fruits of the earth when he was intent on them as on a cavalry charge when that was his business. To see him in his simple *château* near Paris walking in the gardens with Madame la Maréchale was to see Philemon and Baucis cultivating their plot. If you should suggest to him that he should be unfaithful to Madame Ney his round eyes would open in wonder and he would ask why you should pursue another woman when you were blessed with complete contentment. And the moment he had a moment's leave, off he was down there to his wife and his *château* and his children and his pigs.

He had been a very simple rough fellow even when he was a general but, once he learned that he had nearly lost Madame Ney by his uncouthness, he had ever since paid as much attention to his uniforms as any cornet of horse for the first time on parade. His generalship was the same. He was a goodish general and knew for instance that if you charge suddenly into the flank of troops marching along a road they will break and their communications be cut, or how to use artillery against horsemen. But what he knew he had learned copybook fashion, his brows knotted and his tongue rolling in his cheek. In the midst of battles he would suddenly say: "Ha, we have them on the flank!"—the idea having come suddenly



home to him. . . . But he was a great commander—the greatest!—of units of whatever size, because he was adored by his men and what they had to do he would make them do.

“Why,” the Colonel-Count concluded, “though I do not love the Allemanic Alsatians and their monotonous greenery and pine forests, and though I love Corsica with its *machia* and aridities, and though I should love all Corsicans I would lay down my life as lief for Ney as for the Emperor, though I offer my life daily and with alacrity. For, though Napoleon too may appear a simple soul seated at his fireside with his child at his knee, yet you will never know his nature nor so much as his mood. He was simple enough and at leisure enough and full of bonhomie when he gave orders for the shooting of the Duc d’Enghien, though all the ladies of the court hung round his neck and besought him not to. . . . Nay, I have seen him, at the time of the creation of his new court and the drawing up of the protocol, when it was a madness of intriguing for precedence amongst those same ladies—ay, and their lords too!—I have seen him sit playing by the hour at Manila with half a dozen of those same ladies, and indulgent and benevolent—and one or maybe two of them having visited him in his little room that was guarded by the Mameluke! . . . And then suddenly like ice, like steel, with six words he would break all six hearts on a matter of who should walk first behind Madame Hortense or Madame Pauline. And mind you, you might rack your mind and never know whether he had not invented that simple occasion and played at that bonhomie merely in order to have the opportunity



to crush them the more effectually—or whether it had come into his hand on the spur of the moment, so that he had no natural bonhomie. . . .”

But to be sure, the Colonel-Count mused on, those women drove the court distracted with their quarrels, and indulged in treason the better to insure precedence. He, the Colonel-Count, had seen Napoleon turn round like a mountain cat from before the fireplace to face ‘Madame d’Abrantès—Junot’s wife—and address to her words that would have been out of place in a Bridewell. And next moment he would be smiling on some pretty piece—Madame de Frèjus as like as not! . . . But was the smiling genuine—or the cold rage? Who knew? But Ney . . . Ney! Ah, that was different. His rage in battle was rage; his love for Madame Ney was love; his delight in children delight, and if he grew great cabbages it was because he loved to have the greatest cabbages in his Department.

“In short,” the Colonel-Count finished, “though I daily lay down my life for the Emperor in his uniform at the head of his columns or, for the matter of that, would lay down my life by intercepting with my own body a stroke aimed by an assassin at his heart, for Ney I would gladly go to the gallows or before a firing squad though Ney were but in his carpet slippers!”

“But, *mon colonel*,” the young man asked, “is it not true that Ney betrayed the Emperor to these Bourbons?”

“I have talked too much,” the Colonel-Count replied. “You would never think I had a reputation for silence and discretion such as—as you know—has made me the

confidant of ladies and the bearer of their billets. But that loquacity comes from this air which I breathe again and it is to be presumed that I talk in order that I may not shout and bawl and cast my shako to the treetops. So I will make no bones about saying 'No' to your question and I will say to you what I have said to the Emperor himself."

In his opinion Napoleon had erred in sending Ney along with Marshal Macdonald to negotiate with the Allies after their entry into Paris. For it is an error in a very devious and subtle man to send a very simple one to negotiate for him. The Emperor had declared that he desired to abdicate his throne so that France might be at peace, and Ney took him at his word. But the last thing that Napoleon desired in truth was to abdicate his throne, whether France were at peace or no. He desired to gain time.

But Ney resigned the throne for the Emperor and, once at peace, was, so simply enamoured of the joys and advantages of peace that his loyalty to the Bourbons, once he had taken his oath to them, was simple and unshakable. To the various envoys of the King of Elba who had sounded him he had returned that one simple answer, and that, conveyed to Napoleon, had convulsed him with rage. But the Colonel-Count doubted whether Napoleon even believed what he said against Ney. He worked himself up to say it or he believed it policy to say it. And indeed it is better when those you have loaded with favours—and fame too, for it was Napoleon who first proclaimed to the world that Ney was the bravest

of the brave—so it was indeed bitter to find him steadfast against his benefactor, be the gesture never so laudable or justified.

“But now,” the Colonel-Count said, “we approach the outskirts of the good village of Cannes and I have talked enough. Besides we cannot make a formal parade of entry chattering like two monkeys on horseback!”

An extraordinary elation settled down on that young man—and again he blessed his olive twig—which he had over his heart because whilst he had picked it he had been thinking of his Hélène.

Was it not enough to have had an analysis of character of his demi-gods from one who had been their intimate for a quarter century? But in addition he was entering a town at the head of a column of the Napoleonic Army that for a quarter century too had been the dread and the cynosure of the entire universe!

On the outskirts there were hovels, rush-thatched and miserable enough, mostly with upper storeys that had projecting roofs and no walls, with nets drying all down their fronts and a fisher population squalid enough. But there were some well-looking villas, white and agreeable, with roofs of red tiles and here and there a red pot that supported a spiky plant with stiff, lush juicy leaves. . . . And everywhere human beings ran. . . . They ran onto the verandas, out of doorways, along the streets before the horses—at the sound of the music.

It was intolerably thrilling in the narrow main street that ran through the town—the *Marseillaise*, shut in between the houses and raging. . . . There were even

shops, tradesmen who stood at the doors; women with kerchiefs waved from upper windows that were on a level with the faces of those that rode. . . . Wine merchants, oil merchants, fish merchants, taverners, tin-smiths! It was queer to see the everyday accompaniments of life through a hail of glory!

A couple of young girls who were carrying sheaves of roses started to see the troops. Then they tore blossoms and buds from the stems and cast them beneath the feet of Napoleon's charger. One plucked an iris with two buds from a jar on a butcher's slab and threw it at George Feilding. It struck him on the shoulder and he found that that was glory.

They debouched upon an open place one of whose sides was the sea, and here they came down from their horses; the guns rumbled to a halt; the men hung their muskets by the strap over their shoulders and, removing their bearskins or shakos, wiped their brows. The sun shone; the populace, that at first backed timidly against the house walls, ventured gradually by ones and twos into the Place and towards the soldiers, children clinging to their mothers' high waists in gestures of taking refuge. With a queer thrill the young man heard English spoken. . . . Was it not glorious that his compatriots should see him come riding all glorious, beside a demi-god!



PART

II







## CHAPTER ONE

**M**ADAME NEY, all in black, very tall, high-waisted, brown-eyed, brown-complexioned and beginning to put on weight as befitted the matron but bearing it very well as became the gallant wife of the most brilliant of men, walked with Hélène de Frèjus on the sanded paths of the Little Luxembourg, Gardens, Hélène being in a pale violet. The weather was bright in the avenues; guns thundered in the distance; thrushes ran on the green lawns, stopped, and ran again. At each reverberation of a salvo from a distance Madame Ney checked her pace and placed her hand over her heart.

"It can't be that they are resisting the usurper's entrance," she said. "What a thing are illusions! . . . Oh, the poor men! . . . My poor man!"

"No, my dear, poor, cherished Aglaë," Hélène would say; "it cannot be . . . it is all finished. . . . Those are salvos of joy that salute a re-rising sun!"

They wandered in silence. There were other saunterers in the garden; a pair of men had odiously dogged their footsteps; a mother wandered with a child; a dozen or so of soldiers, with a sergeant, a lieutenant, a colonel and a general, white cockades in their hats, had lately come and now stood at ease in a huddle. The sergeant conducted a man to each of the four entrances of the garden and saw them fix their bayonets.

"Why, it is a little soon," Madame Ney said with deep bitterness, "to close the gardens to the public before the king is seated on the still-warm throne of Napoleon!"

When they passed the general in his great hat with the white cockade, he hesitated; you would have said he blushed. Then he bade call the men to attention and saluted the Princess of the Moskwa.

"Nevertheless," Hélène said, "he did not expel us at the bayonet point or inform us that our entrée to the gardens was withdrawn. That will come soon. They are in a hurry!"

"I know that general slightly," Madame Ney said, "I cannot think of his name. He wears no orders. . . . Well, what orders is he to wear? . . . What is anyone to wear? . . . You remember, at Lyons, the valet of Monsieur who alone remained faithful to him in his flight. . . . The Emperor sent him the cross for fidelity. The valet was afterwards about the Tuileries, wearing the cross. . . . What things one remembers! I wonder if he wears it today!"

. . . Ah, Hélène remembered and saw! Before Lyons the post-carriage of herself and the Baron had overtaken Napoleon with his few companions—and her heart had beaten furiously: she could not have believed her heart could have beaten so furiously or that she could have mumbled so. George Feilding had ridden to the carriage side. De Frèjus was out on the road speaking to Napoleon on his grey horse. He had been like a man thunder-struck—the young man in scarlet.

He had exclaimed: "You!" and then: "We shall not . . . we shall not be separated. . . ."

She had mumbled: "Please God . . . please God not. . . ."

Then she knew why she had noted nothing of the long road from Genoa to there. . . . She had wept when the carriage drove on and the Baron had said that if she was afraid she had better descend and rest at a roadside house. It was necessary that he should reach Lyons before a Jew called Stossenfusser—something like that—could leave it with his gold: or hide the gold. It was necessary. The expenses of the Empire were to begin there. The Jew Stossenfusser had an immense sum—a million napoleons perhaps. Destined for Louis, and the property of England! . . . She remembered!

They had caught up with a squadron of the Fourth Hussars at the bridge before the Lyons suburb of La Guillaterie and had seen them meet the two battalions of Monsieur, the King's heir. They had seen Marshal Macdonald with Monsieur. . . . The hussars and Monsieur's men had fallen into each other's arms, the royalist troops tearing the white cockades from their hats and substituting the tricolours that they had already in their knapsacks! Funny to see two thousand men, all with their hats off, as if at a job of millinery, the hussars aiding them—holding their packs. . . . Standing up in the carriage, her husband huzzaing beside her and waving his fantastic shako, she had seen the heir to the throne jostle his horse round through the crush and push, push, push his way, fleeing, up the street. The soldiers perhaps hardly knew him; the faces of the Bourbon princes were not familiar to their subjects or soldiery. . . . Marshal Macdonald, however, the men had seized. But other

royalist troops coming down the street hustled him away and set him free; then they, too, began tearing the cockades from their hats! French soldiers do not arrest a Marshal of France!

A guard of honour—in white! Young men and fat old citizens—in the King's white!—had further blocked the streets. They were coming to range themselves round the Emperor—the guard of honour of Monsieur! They wore on their breasts enormous tricolour rosettes. They should have dressed themselves altogether in red, white and blue—or have painted their skins; Napoleon had dismissed them with contumely. The carriage of the Baron and Baroness de Frèjus had been blocked till Napoleon came riding up. She had again seen her young gallant in scarlet for a second or so. Her heart had not beaten so fast as before—but, ah, it had beaten! . . . Gallant, good, immensely strong . . .

He should have been there, now, in the Little Luxembourg. . . . Why was he not there? Why must she see him and not see him? . . . It was as if scarlet superimposed itself over the lilacs: vision-scarlet: memory-features! She had been with him three days ago at Aglaë's! She was this morning to have said "Yes" to his urgings. . . . By that time she should have surrendered! She had already felt a hundred times the giving way of her knees! Beneath the muslin skirt with its violet sprigs! She felt still his farewell embrace upon her lips. . . .

Madame Ney beside her said: "I am fain to wish he might come that I might see him. . . . But it would be better, with those soldiery, if he did not come!"

Hélène said: "He . . . ah, the Marshal! Oh, what need has he to fear the soldiery?"

Madame Ney said: "Have you not already predicted to us a White Terror? In the Revolution they had the Red Terror. Now it is to be the White Terror. They say that the ultra-legitimists have already made out lists for proscription. . . . You know your own cousins are the most active at it. How do you know your own name and mine are not by now upon their lists?"

Hélène said: "There is no soldier of France would arrest the Marshal!"

"You say that to comfort me," Madame Ney answered. "It is not what you think. Soldiers in their time arrested Jesus—why not then a Marshal of France?"

She added: "I wish those men did not follow us. I do not like those men."

The men were large with the bulging appearance of bruisers, in black, with immense high hats, cutaway coats and knee-breeches. They appeared to saunter without purpose, inspecting the treetops.

Hélène said: "Let us walk across the open towards the Closerie des Lilas. Maybe we shall see a carriage coming. If my husband is not here soon he will collide with George. I would not have them meet. Frederick will without doubt consent to the divorce if you ask it, but I would not have them meet!"

They crossed a grassy open space that went up hill, leaving before them and to the west the restaurant and garden of the Closerie des Lilas, a small *estaminet* with its name in great letters between the upper windows and a long, blank brick wall, roughly plastered, above which



peeped the tops of the lilac trees. Here the Parisians of hot evenings would walk amongst the bushes and drink wines, but by day it was a very solitary spot.

So it had seemed a very proper place for these women who went in some fear of proscription to meet their menfolk who might well have fears still greater. It was a high place. From where they turned to look down the road they could see, glimmering and green to the north, heights with a windmill here and there turning.

"Between here and there lies all Paris!" Madame Ney said. "It is for the dominion of that space that we have so suffered. It is strange to see it lie so calm!"

She said: "If we had not come up so fast from Lagny—if we had had less good horses we should not have had so to wait!"

"It is agony!" Hélène said. "It might have been better to have appointed a café in the crowded streets. There there would have been something to occupy the eyes and the mind. . . . We are besides very conspicuous here."

"It is too late to think of that," Madame Ney said. "Ah . . ." Her brown skin through which the red blood glowed grew ashen: her brown eyes stared, wide apart. Far away down the long road that ran into Paris at an angle to the hedges of the Little Luxembourg, a carriage was coming at a gallop. It had four horses; as it swung from side to side of the road they could see, very high because of the great springs that supported it, that the carriage held a single, large man in a great hat.

Madame Ney held her hand over her heart, her face paler and paler.

"It is Ney!" she said. "I wish there were no soldiers here. And why a general?"

"He was here to direct the posting of the sentries at the entries," Hélène reassured. She added: "No; it is not the Marshal, neither. It is Frèjus."

Madame Ney said: "Oh, I am thankful. The Marshal must remain hiding in obscure places. He must not come out into the open." Slowly the colour came back to her cheeks. "But nevertheless I must meet him," she said, "he is so obstinate. He needs counsel. Yet he can come neither to our house here, nor yet in the country. It is hard that folk who have so served their country should be treated so!"

The horses in the carriage broke into a trot, the post-boys leaning back to restrain them. Perceiving the ladies, Frèjus stood up in the carriage and pointed to them. The equipage swerved over the turf, having been making for the Little Luxembourg entrance.

Frèjus alighted slowly when the footman who had been behind him let down the steps. He was tired but he was also weighted, having in each hand a round cloth bag that might have contained a pudding. But those bags were too weighty. He dropped one back onto the cushion of the carriage so that he might remove his hat with a flourish.

"Madame la Princesse," he said, "I have here what was needed. There are in addition bills on the Fustosser of Brussels, Antwerp and London, and they can give him bills on New . . . New York is it not called? . . . if he decides to cross the ocean." He dropped the other back too into the carriage.

He placed himself beside Madame Ney. Till then he had not looked at H  l  ne. They walked towards the Little Luxembourg.

"The Marshal is not yet here?" he asked. "It is otherwise all in readiness. Another carriage waits at the cross-roads a mile back. All my men are most trustworthy!" He looked at H  l  ne then with a deliberate and incomprehensible glance—as a gourmand might gloat over a large meal. "It would appear," he said, "that my women are not so trustworthy. It would appear that Madame and I are not to meet again. They say in England where Madame la Baronne was born that rats desert a sinking ship!"

H  l  ne stretched her hands appealingly towards him across Madame la Mar  chale.

"Oh, do not say that," she said. "You of all of us are the only one that stands in no peril and have all your wealth and gear. Would I desert you if you were in peril or sickness? You know I would not. Nor yet if you were in need!"

The two suspicious, bulging men had emerged from the Little Luxembourg and deviously approached the three who were now near the entrance. They surveyed the party with immense eyes and passed on.

"Do not speak too loud," Madame Ney said; "I do not like those men."

"I should not myself choose them for companions!" the Baron said, and he and H  l  ne looking back simultaneously saw that one of the pair had his arm raised and the other was studying a paper.

"What shall we do? What shall we do?" Hélène cried out.

"Why, we will walk in the Little Luxembourg Gardens," the Baron answered. "There is nothing else for it. They are between us and the carriage and there are soldiery on the roads."

The legs of those women would scarcely support them, but they reached a seat nevertheless and sat on it side by side after the Baron had jauntily dusted it with his red and gold bandanna. His hat was black and immense but all the rest of him was in tight blue, stockings and all.

"Why," he said, "it is a pretty scheme, a journey to Elysium." He addressed more particularly Madame Ney, who regarded him with pitiful eyes. "If my wife would have a divorce she had better procure it today or tomorrow. For in a day or two there will be no more divorces." He added ironically to his wife: "And I might fall ill between the cup and the lip, or fall upon need. And what should poor Nellie do then?"

Madame Ney said: "I do not know what to think! . . . There are too many things to think. . . . You are a good man, Frederick. . . ."

He bent to raise her hand to his lips.

"I am a good man if I am not crossed," he said. "But there will none the less be obstacles. . . ."

There came footsteps behind their backs. A man cleared his throat and exclaimed a little tremulously:

"M. le Maréchal . . . M. le Prince de la Moskwa. . . ."

The Baron's face extended itself in a profound and enigmatic grin. It went to Hélène's heart to see that grin—it was so humorous and so damned. She said to herself: "Thank God, the Marshal is not here. These soldiers are here to arrest him!" It was clear now why the men in black had followed them!

The Baron said to her in bad English:

"I presume you have not cuckolded me. . . . But you will have difficulties! I desired to call in on your popinjay just now, for I have a message to give him. But his staircase was full of redcoats who put bayonets on my chest."

It was the first time she had seen him face to face since she had written to him that she desired a divorce. He was suffering: certainly he was suffering. Grief descended upon her.

The general with his colonel beside him stood in front of them, between them and the grass. The general was young and ingenuous, the colonel much older: there were young generals in those days. He said:

"*Mon Maréchal*, I regret . . . before Madame la Princesse . . ."

Frèjus looked at the ground, in reflection. The colonel whispered to the general:

"That is not Ney . . . I am sure it is not Ney, or he is much altered!"

Frèjus grinned and his face cleared.

"You propose to shoot me!" he exclaimed with a wide gesture towards the landscape beyond the hedge of the garden. "There is an admirable wall there and no one to

witness the dead but the firing squad and these ladies!"

Hélène exclaimed: "Oh, Frederick. . . ." They must not shoot him.

The general exclaimed: "God forbid!" his face suffused with blood. "This is an arrest . . . a detention. . . . Do you believe I would preside at your assassination?"

The colonel had beckoned to him one of the men in black. The fellow approached, removing his black hat and placing it behind his back. He had a red bulbous nose and was noticeably bald. He whispered to the colonel behind his hand. He read in a paper, stared at Frèjus, whispered again to the colonel.

"I cannot believe it to be the Prince of the Moskwa," the colonel said. "The features it is true have a resemblance: but there is a difference in the bearing. . . . Yet it must be. I admit that it must be!"

The fellow in black said: "The letter from Madame la Maréchale . . . I have the copy here . . . begged Marshal Ney to meet Madame la Maréchale at this spot at this hour!"

Madame Ney placed her hand over her heart: her eyes, which had been gazing across the lawns towards the carriage, became as fixed as if they had been cast in brown metal—an extraordinary gaze!

"You are too eager for your reward," the colonel said to the informer. "If you or Fouché or whoever it was intercepted the letter, how could Ney have the information, so how could he be here?"

Madame Ney gazed continuously at the carriage. The footman got down from the rumble and, though it was



fine day, engaged himself in raising the hood. Hélène could see the top of a tall hat behind the rumble from which the footman had descended.

"My God! He is there . . . Ney is there!" She whispered that in English to her husband, but kept her eyes on the gravel of the path.

The informer exclaimed to the colonel:

"Do you suppose we did not deliver the letter to M. du Ferrand to whom it was addressed? It was the Comte Decazes who signed the warrant, not the Duc d'Otranto. We followed also Ferrand . . . but this has proved the better shadowing. That is all there is to it!"

Madame Ney exclaimed suddenly with simulated scorn but her voice was shaking:

"Can there not be an end of all this? Can you not make an end of all this dirty work that a general of France should blush to engage on? But you are in good company if so early the Bourbons have found a peer of France to sign the warrant. . . . But make an end."

She shivered but could not keep her eyes off the carriage.

The general blushed indeed and exclaimed in turn hotly: "Madame, I am here as a courtesy, that a higher officer may be present to wait upon the Marshal. This Colonel Durand, the Provost Marshal's assistant, is here to effect the arrest itself."

Madame Ney rose with a fine scorn.

"Well, the hangman's apprentice must do hangman's work. I beg you to go on with it. . . ." She exclaimed: "Oh!" in a piteous tone and: "This waiting is killing me!" She sank down again on the bench and sobbed piti-

fully, covering her face. She whispered to H       who, her husband having sprung to his feet, had her arms about the weeping woman:

"Why will he not drive away! Why will he not drive away? I saw him enter the carriage. Others could have seen . . ."

"All eyes are on us here," H       whispered back. "How could he drive away and leave you whom he sees surrounded by soldiery!"

The Baron had stretched out his hands, his wrists together.

"Here, put on your handcuffs," he cried in a clear voice. "Conduct me before the Provost Marshal or any other low company you keep. When I was soldiering that was a fellow whose society I avoided!"

The general exclaimed: "God forbid, *mon mar  chal*. . . . But if you will walk with me . . ."

The Baron said: "But willingly, my general. . . . I think you are General . . . General Lamorici  re."

Madame Ney, who was indeed shaken with grief and fear, extended a hand towards the Baron, her face still covered by her thin shawl.

"A brave man . . . a good man . . ." she said, but H       sprang towards her husband. She clung with both hands to his shoulder.

"They shall not hurt you!" she said. "They dare not harm you. Tell me that they shall not harm a hair of your head."

The young general decently withdrew to a few paces; Fr       pushed her from him and stood jauntily, his legs apart, a shining figure in the sun.

"Why, madame," he exclaimed ironically, "if you have cuckolded me it is all one to me what they do to me. . . ."

She wept: "Never! Never! I never have . . ."

He said: "Why then, madame, it is all the worse. For if it is bad to lose an unfaithful wife, it is all the worse to lose one that is true to you. For my part I care not what they do to me."

She exclaimed: "Oh, cruel! Cruel!"

"Madame," he answered, "the world is a cruel place. . . . But I do not anticipate that they can do me much harm. They should be laughed to tatters. Warn however Schultheiss. If they detain me bid him bring me body linen and other comforts. I bid you farewell. If your gallant is indeed arrested I would advise you to communicate with milor Assheton Smith and to hurry, hurry, hurry. Milor is in Wales; a long journey. If you detain me here longer you will endanger the departure of . . . him who must not be arrested. That I should deprecate for I have put myself to some trouble that he may escape!"

She cried out: "It is I that will bring you your body linen and comforts, not Schultheiss!"

Ever since the news of Waterloo had come three weeks before—and on the same day, when all Paris ran distracted in the narrow streets, she had met in the rue St. Honoré her detested cousin Louis, otherwise the Vicomte Clermont-St. Cyr-Brion, who had told her with a sour triumph that they, the Royalists, were already making out their lists of proscriptions—ever since the news of Waterloo she had lived under overpowering emotions of

fear, passion and despair for public affairs. Now all these came to a head and for a moment she no longer knew what happened. She saw vaguely Frèjus walking away beside the young general, the squad of soldiers marching at a decent interval behind them; the July sun beat down on her but she was shivering and she was aware of tottering, both her hands stretched out and downwards in order to balance herself . . . tottering and wavering towards a bench in the shade of the avenue. She must be in shade; she could not bear the light. Her heart beat rapidly like that of a linnet that she had once held in her hand; her lips were parted like the same linnet's, the breath issuing from her parched mouth in little jets as fast as the beatings of her heart. Her mind had stopped.

She was aware that a woman's arms were about her; that a woman was entreating her to go to the carriage. She exclaimed:

"No, no! Do not go yet. . . . Observe carefully that no one watches you!"

She did not know why she panted those words out: she must be voicing a thought she had formerly had. She held on to her wavering mind to say:

"Walk round . . . walk round outside the garden before you approach the carriage. It will take you twenty minutes away from your husband but the precaution is worth while. You will see if you are followed. If not come to me and I will go with you. . . . Or no, I will not go with you. . . . Go! Walk! Walk!"

She did not look up but sat staring at the gravel: footsteps went away from her. It was all quiet; not even a thrush sang in the noontide heat. . . . A small statue of

Pan on a column stood poised on one foot, the other raised knee-high. He blew into double pipes. His face grinned—as Frederick's had grinned. A grin of the damned. . . . Frederick suffered the tortures of the damned. Pan too perhaps: he had no soul! He was immortal but had no soul!

You might have said that of the Emperor until the other day: he had appeared immortal at least, and cold. But at Fontainebleau he had at least appeared mortal. Solitary, unoccupied, deprived of tenderness, standing at a high window, playing with the blind-cord. A demi-god with no occupation but to play with a blind-cord in an empty room! . . . He had worn white breeches and a white waistcoat, a blue coat with a red collar. He was grown baldish; the dark hair on his temples thin. . . . But why a red collar? A silver star on his right breast! Why a silver star? Why on his right breast? . . . Why?

They had spoken, but he had not looked round. She herself had approached him and, bending, had kissed the alabaster hand that was behind his back. Madame Ney had been prepared to do the same—for remembrance of old times. Latterly he had been ungenerous to Ney. But Madame Ney was generous and kind. He had however pivoted round on his feet, slowly. His face was immobile, like marble. It had the still look of destiny: but it had always the still look of destiny. His glance too was always as of an eagle's. So it remained. His brows nevertheless lifted themselves.

He said: "Madame la Princesse!" and remained pondering. He went on: "Ah, you are passing on your way



to Montereau. The Prince of the Moskwa is at Montereau. Tomorrow or next day he will be only General Ney as I shall be but General Bonaparte."

Madame Ney, taller by a head than he, had uttered grief, condolences; her brown eyes filled with tears. She was in a riding cloak: they were both in riding cloaks though they had come in the Frèjus berline, Madame Ney in bottle-green, she herself in light fawn—against the dust. There was no knowing whither they would go or how, after Montereau. Napoleon said:

"The Prince of the Moskwa is a brave man. He did well out there. I should have given him an army earlier. . . . But . . . the iron cage! Take care that they do not catch him or they will take him to Paris in an iron cage. . . ."

Madame Ney erected her head; her eyes glowed.

"Sire," she said, "if they did that I should shoot him between the bars. Through the heart."

"And me?" Napoleon had asked. "Ney once swore to Louis to take me from Lyons to Paris in an open cage: if he had, would you have shot me through the heart?"

"Sire," she answered, "first you and then myself!"

"That is the right answer!" he said. He added, speaking faster: "Why! Tell the Marshal that I invite him to go with me to the Americas. I go tonight to Rochefort. They say there is liberty there and it appears to be a vast continent. There should be room there for Ney and me to find corners. Besides they are at war with those English. Maybe Ney and I . . . Lafayette led them to victory against those islanders. They will remember!"

"But no, no!" he added hastily. "I am no longer a poli-



tician. I am a general that has retired in order to write his memories!"

He added: "In that too Ney could aid me! Bid him come! I go tonight to Rochefort and there aboard a frigate . . . to the west!"

They were the last words of his that she could remember. After that they could only see through their tears that, before they had reached the door of the long room, he had turned again to the window and had the blind-cord in his fingers. He had kissed both their foreheads with his cold lips as they bent before him.

Nevertheless, over the cobbled street of Montereau and to the door of the inn as they mounted the steps a trooper had come clattering prodigiously with a note on a folded paper. It had read, in a strange, hurried hand:

"Madame Hélène: the papers relating to the duel and parole of your English friend are in the governor's bureau on the island. Bid him secure them or he may yet come before a firing squad!" There was added in another hand, in pencil. "I salute thee, N." And then: "On entering my carriage going towards boundless distances!"

At first, standing on the inn step in the blinding sun, the three words, irregular across the scrap of paper, and the initial alone entered her mind. . . . But when the rest of the note had at last conveyed its message, immense and unceasing fear had possessed her whole being. For it was true that until then she had thought only that her lover might protect—oh, Frèjus perhaps: Ney even. Even the demi-god himself . . . the fallen demi-god!

That had been a week . . . oh, only a week before! It had been the last day but one of June: now it was the

8th of July. . . . Nine days . . . nine years. . . . Eight? Eighteen since she had met her cousin in the rue St. Honoré! The odious, repulsive, flushed, swaggering gamester. . . . He had pulled a paper from his tail pocket and pointed out names to her . . . a copy of the list of the proscribed that they had been drawing up in a tavern. He had boasted: "Ah: in the Revolution they had the Red Terror; now you shall have a White one that shall freeze the mind of the world to the reeling poles!" He had said she should see things that would put the beheading of the Queen and the pike of the Lamballe in the shade; she should hear the roll of tumbrils enough to deafen the memory of the cannon of Austerlitz! She regretted that she had let him read no further than the name of Marshal Ney, which headed the list. But she could not bear his proximity and his vinous breath had made her retch. Besides, a crowd had gathered, growling to confirm him—a crowd that three days before would have dragged him screaming to a lamp. . . . That had been the 21st of June. The longest day. When fairies go abroad!

But it had not been until she had received in the street that seemed dead quiet after the clattering of the hoofs—it had not been until she had received the note from Napoleon—Imagine a note from Napoleon!—that she had known fear, overwhelming, profound, all-embracing. And it had not been till then that she had known passion—oh, unbearable passion that descended suddenly and left her there in the street with all her limbs powerless.

To say that she had not listened to his pleadings; to

say that she had not till then known love would have been trifling with the issue. . . . She had known many phases—in a hundred days. Say a hundred and twenty . . .

She cried out in alarm. She exclaimed even: "Frèjus!" But it was not Frèjus who was in front of her. He exclaimed:

"Where is she? Madame la Maréchale. . . . I will tear the Conciergerie stone from stone if they . . . I am not one to shrink from trifles. . . ."

It was not, of course, Frèjus. He had the same bulk: almost the same attire. . . . But all men then had the same attire or near it. All bulky men! She said:

"No! I beg you to sit down. Remove too your hat. That you may be less observable. There is Aglaë!"

Madame Ney appeared at the exit of the garden beyond the lawns and the further avenue; she walked on, slowly, without recognition of them.

He gave a great gulp of breath and exclaimed, harshly and terrifyingly:

"I knew they dare not arrest her. I would have raised Paris and torn down the Conciergerie!"

He went on again: "This is your fault, Hélène, with your old wives' tale of a White Terror. Who would dare to arrest me? There are a hundred and ten thousand troops in arms that would rise at once at the name of Ney. . . . Besides there is the amnesty that was declared at Brussels . . . and I have helped the King. . . . Consider! . . . But for my speech in the Chamber the Emperor would now command those troops and the Bourbons would not yet be here. . . . It was you who put

those maggots into my wife's head. . . . Who would arrest me? Or her!"

He threw himself onto the bench as if onto soft cushions: he remained, panting, like a bull before the toreador in the ring after a long course.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "My God!" He wiped his brows with a great handkerchief. He said: "Dearest Hélène! I saw Aglaë here. Then I did not see her, but I saw infantry marching away. Forgive me. I ought not to have come out of the carriage."

He was astonishingly like Frèjus and like Frèjus he had the slightly guttural intonation of the Alsatian speaking French. He had the chestnut hair, the green-brown eyes, the high florid cheek-bones, the heavy figure. Well, they were both Alsations. In his patent of nobility Frèjus was described as Friedrich Scheffauer, born at Colmar. Ney had been born at Strasburg—or maybe at Kehl. The two men had often speculated together as to whether they had not a common ancestry—and Frèjus had a great-uncle that was called Neu, from Münster. The first German general that the Marshal had defeated had been called Neu. The Germans pronounced it Noy, but the French Nö—very like Ney, muted. . . . But Frèjus had spent a long time in the Levant where there were bankers and to spare. In Corsica too. Long enough to call himself a Corsican when he desired to please the Emperor.

The Marshal said: "Yes, it is true. Seated here I am less visible than elsewhere. I will await her here!" Now that his breath had come back to him and the suffusion of blood had left his eyes he was less like Frèjus. The

colour of his cheek-bones was more fresh; he was lighter of foot. He had an inward glow and a tranquillity of great power that no adversity could take from him. He said:

"Dearest Hélène. I have been much annoyed. I had, did I not, at Montereau, the snuff-box the Tsar gave me? I cannot find it."

Perils went off his mind as clouds leave the sun. His chestnut hair was brighter than that of Frèjus. . . . Hélène sighed. But why should she sigh because God had allotted to her for the time a mate less glorious than Ney? She had a lover as glorious and as brave. . . . And it was not fitting to sigh because her mate was the paunchier, softer in the flesh . . . not at that moment when Frèjus had performed a deed of courage. She said:

"You left your snuff-box on the table of the inn. Madame has it safely. The soldiers you saw marching away had arrested the Baron, my husband. In error for you!"

Ney threw himself back on the seat, roaring in unrestrained mirth. He had an immense laugh.

"For *me!*" he exclaimed. "Men could mistake that mound of jelly for me! Have they eyes? I have always been called a fine figure of a man!"

## CHAPTER TWO

**S**UDDENLY he threw himself forward; his face as puzzled as that of a bull who finds himself surrounded by picadors and the rest in the blazing sun immediately after the gloom of the pen.

"But . . ." he said: "but . . ."

Sudden illumination and rage lit up his stubborn features:

"But if they arrested that oaf in mistake for me . . . then . . ."

He raised a great, threatening fist:

"Who dared . . . who dared to . . . to . . . And Louis not yet . . ."

He regarded her with incredulous, bloodshot eyes.

"But you are jesting," he said; "it is in bad taste, let me tell you. Where is my wife? . . . Nevertheless I saw soldiers . . . only a few! They would not arrest me with a corporal's guard!"

She said: "No doubt they thought that if they sent more the cortège would cause attention. . . . Attempts at rescue, perhaps. . . . It was the Comte Decazes who signed the . . . the *lettre de cachet*! The young fellow who was Fouché's underling. But the King liked him much."

He sat pondering, shaking his head a little.

"Where is my wife?" he asked. "I must consult . . . But no . . ."



He regarded Hélène again, his heavy-lidded eyes a little devious.

"No!" he exclaimed huskily; "do not tell Madame la Princesse what I . . . what I let drop. . . ." He added: "She is long in coming. . . . You would imagine at such a time she would hasten. . . ."

She said: "She has to take precautions. She has to see that no one is following her."

He exclaimed: "Who would dare to follow . . ." Then he relapsed into silence, puzzling!

It was difficult indeed for him to realize how the world had changed. She herself could see that. It seemed but yesterday that tumultuous crowds had been acclaiming the victory of Quatre Bras and the Empire had appeared solid on its base. . . . It was true that three days later they had equally acclaimed the defeat of Mont St. Jean. The long silence lasted. It was astonishingly silent. Well, it was a July noon. Pan's hour! . . . Frèjus was a sort of Pan. Not Ney. Oh no, not Ney! . . . It astonished her that she had her thoughts clear again. It seemed scarcely ten minutes since she had been near delirium. . . .

That was no boon. . . . It seemed to her that she alone of the little clan she cared for, had to bear the whole burden of fear and knowledge. She knew not only the gloomy and implacable nature of the Bourbon hatred but she had especial fears. She had to fear not only for her husband, not only for her lover, but for these friends who even then did not know to what lengths the mournful and chilly hatred of the Bourbons could go. And not only of the Bourbons! There were the whole clan of the

*émigrés*—her clan! If the obese and somnolent royal personages should be inclined to stay their hands they must—to secure their very throne and its supporters!—cast a great prey to the wolves. And if her cousin and his mates were odious and cruel when they were besotted with wine—as Clermont-St. Cyr had been when she had met him in the street—they were worse than that when they were coldly and soberly vindictive. Drunk, they were relatively good-natured satyrs: at least cheerful, but when sober they were snakes—cold, damned, infinitely skilful at plotting disaster. . . . Gamblers, pimps, small tradesmen, drunkards, whoremongers—they would sell their honours to the devil and then scheme to betray the purchaser himself. And these men held in their hands the lives of all she most loved. And these men had a mania of gold. . . .

*Her husband had diverted from their crawling fingers a stream of gold that might have come to them!*

Why did that thought have to come to her at that moment? Why? Why? Had she not tortures enough! Just Heavens! . . . Not enough!

There was this bull-man—this Minotaur!—to be feared for. And his beloved, his beloved wife. The dear! The Majestic! . . . Oh, poor dears: they could not know what was coming. . . . The wife feared at most exile. He, the bull-man, feared nothing. He bellowed and whilst bellowing felt still all-powerful. . . . A demi-god!

Why were men so brave? Frèjus, whom this man had called an oaf, was maybe the braver of the two. He at least knew that he was running into grave peril when he allowed the noose prepared for Ney to settle over his

neck. Grave peril! *His* cynical, Satanic mind appreciated that. He must at least be aware that he was putting himself into the power of men at whom he had gibed, whom he had thwarted.

The long, stone, closed façade of the Fusstossers' bank at Lyons came into her mind—with Frèjus, suddenly descended from their carriage, hammering on the great, yellow-grained door with the handle of the whip he had snatched from one of the postillions. . . . There was gold behind those doors. . . . There had been none when Frèjus had gone away! . . . She remembered the eyes of the Jew peeping at them from the grilles that obscured the windows . . . the grin on Frèjus's face!

He had—it was true—left paper in exchange for their gold. You could trust him not to let the pockets of the Fusstossers suffer. . . . But those people had a certain fidelity to their employers; and what good was paper—signed with the best names in the world—to their employers at that juncture? It was to make enemies of them merely to make them fail their employers. . . . And that rout of drunkards, gamblers and whoremongers had had to flee from Paris without the English-derived gold. . . . English-derived!

Alas! English gold was at the bottom of all these disasters. . . . And this had proved not even to be English gold. Or yes, English ingots . . . but that bullion had turned out to be English gold coined by the Fusstossers and the English in Flanders. In the shape of napoleons! . . . For the payment of Wellington's troops when he had been doing his cold butcher's work round Bordeaux.

Butcher Wellington could not pay his way with guineas. . . . Oh, singular ramifications of gold . . . English guineas were worth less in exchange than napoleons, so people would not take them! Yet Napoleon was tottering then to his first fall. . . . All the same it had had to be napoleons that the Fusstossers smuggled through France to Wellington. . . .

And it was the last instalments of this gold, returning from Bordeaux, that Frèjus had demanded of the Jew in the great house at Lyons.

Well, he had known it had been dangerous! He had known that if Napoleon fell a second time he would have, piling themselves on his back to drag him down, not only the Fusstossers, but the drunkards and gamblers and the Bourbons and the English—and the implacable Wellington! He had known it! His grin—his mischievous magpie's, his Pan's grin—betokened that. Now he had put himself into their power. To save Ney! . . . Why? . . . Well, they were both Alsatians. . . . In their power! Wellington ruled that city, its palaces, its streets, its jails! . . . And you could say that Frèjus had betrayed the Bourbon king! He had financed the Bourbon king in England . . . If he had not done that financing, Louis XVIII would have been less obese. He might have been able to enter his capital a-horseback as a king should. For surely no one else would have lent money to Louis and his minions if Frèjus had not backed the loans. Then Louis would have starved!

Since then Frèjus had financed Napoleon. . . . That was to betray Louis. If you feed Louis and then Napoleon

that is to betray Louis! . . . And Louis had again entered Paris in his carriage! And Frèjus was already no doubt in a cell.

Why, merely to let himself be arrested in place of another was a crime! And when they came to investigate and found that he was that Alsatian!

Why then had he done it? Why had he mutely submitted to arrest? Partly to save Ney? Partly out of despair at the fall of Napoleon. . . . But he was not ruined. He had sufficiently speculated in the opposite camps—she knew that!—to cover himself. He had told her that—out of consideration, to spare her anxiety about money! . . . If he had not done that would she ever have yielded to the supplications of the young man? She did not know. . . .

She remembered Frèjus suddenly as he had told her, standing beside her whilst she sat at her dressing table in her tall boudoir of their great hotel in the rue St. Honoré. He had been in negotiation with the London Fusstossers for English funds that were then much depreciated owing to the news and the endless drain of gold from England. . . . England had not been able to find troops enough to come up to the standard of the Allies. So she paid twenty pounds a year for each foot-soldier missing and thirty for each cavalry-man. . . . Always, always the English gold!

She remembered! Frèjus, with his other grin that attended successful speculations had laid his hand consolatorily on her shoulder. All the colour had gone out of the pink silk roses that draped her mirror; out of the pink silk wrapper that was about her shoulders—



and out of her shoulders and face in the mirror! He had suddenly appeared to her black-haired and moustached! . . . When he had been agreeable to her she saw him as chestnut-haired!

He had bidden her not to be anxious. She should keep her great hotel and her great equipages, the bay horses and the white, the palfreys and jennets! He had made the investments in her name!

She had sprung suddenly up and faced him.

"I had rather," she had cried out, "you had taken for me the bottom-most chamber in the bottom-most pit of hell!"

He had laughed and argued with her, his voice going on and on, but she had not answered. Her knees had weakened and she had sunk down again before her mirror. She had determined to be cruel to him. How then?

He was behind her. She had a sense of him, black, greasy, loquacious, floridly troubled. If she were not advantaged by the speculation, others would have been. . . . She had a sense of the Emperor, slaving, slaving, slaving for France in the great halls of the Tuileries . . . the lonely figure!

Ah, and she had a sense of the other—the young man, splendid and spotless, impassioned and pained beyond bearing. . . . He awaited her now and she was overwhelmed by the sense of him, too, lonely in her great salon, standing at the window and gazing into the courtyard with its high blank wall. . . . All the while that oaf spoke on in his suety voice with the burred accent she felt the presence of the other. She was going to him: she was going to him. For ever . . . Oh, to the Americas!



For he too was a pained soul! Life, gaiety, assurance had faded out of him! No, you would never have known it to look at him. He remained erect, his glance straightforward, his voice thrilling. . . .

Her face looked cruel in the glass. Cruel! Cruel! . . . She took her hare's foot and minutely darkened the inner corners of her eyes. She must account to the other for the look of cruelty. But when she was in his arms!

She rose and pointed an imperious hand to the door. She said:

"Go! You have never been a husband to me. . . . Now I will no longer be so much as a decoy for you! I came to you with no more than a shift of my own to my back. I will leave you in the same trim!"

Nevertheless he was waiting outside her door when she came out in a little frock of black.

"If you go to that popinjay," he had said, "I go too."

"Then I shall not go!" she had said and had gone back again into her room. She had written a note to the young man bidding him await her at the house of Madame Ney and had sent it by her maid through the other door. She had too prayed the young man to shun her husband as he would the plague. He must not kill Frèjus in a duel. . . . Frèjus was thundering on her door raving that she had cuckolded him and addressing to her in any language of which he was at all master, except French, the foulest epithets at his command. She admitted him at last and he was revealed in all the disorder of a heavy man exhausted by passion—grasping at his neckerchief, his hair in his eyes, staggering in his gait, leaning against

the gilded door-posts or the door itself. He began to ask her incessantly if she had been unfaithful to him and for a long time she returned him no answer. At last she said:

"No! I have always been faithful to you. But I shall be so no longer if you do not consent to divorce me or to a nullification of our marriage brought about how you will!"

He grasped her with both his hands on her shoulders and so steadied himself, gazing deep into her eyes.

"That is true?" he kept on asking. "True? True? True?" Then he had rushed from the room and apparently had coursed half through the house in search of George Feilding. Then he had once more returned and uttered a number of disjointed speeches that she had not been able to follow.

At the time she had been full of loathing for him. She had left the house and had placed herself under the protection of the *Princesse de la Moskwa* who sadly enough needed consolation and companionship and who was willing enough to conduct negotiations with the Baron. Frèjus Madame Ney by no means disliked. He had conducted many successful negotiations for Ney and had even gone so far as to remonstrate with the Emperor as to the neglect that Napoleon meted out to the bravest of brave men. But the Baron had replied that then was no time for negotiations and they imagined that, as in the course of his ravings he had threatened to do, he had written to Squire Feilding about the whole matter. The Squire might be imagined as having a double interest in any marriage of his son to Madame de Frèjus,

for not only was the boy his heir but he had provided the dowry for H  l  ne herself.

That the Baron should have brought the money with the aid of which the Marshal was to transport himself abroad was inevitable enough. He was the Marshal's banker—and indeed in those unsettled moments when no one knew whether the next coin of the realm should be a napoleon or a louis or even a guinea or a thaler it would have been difficult enough for Madame Ney to obtain money for her husband. And H  l  ne herself had been ready to meet her husband in the company of the Neys since she imagined that by now he might be resigned enough to submit himself to the combined remonstrances of Madame Ney and his wife. He had never been pig-headedly obstinate.

At Montereau Ney had shown little fear that the Bourbons would take steps against him. He cited the Brussels amnesty and imagined himself too popular with the inhabitants of Paris to dread molestation at the hands of the Royalists. But he saw that his wife was overwhelmed by fear at the news H  l  ne had given her of the list of proscriptions her cousin had exhibited, and he had lazily and good-humouredly consented to remain in that remote spot and to take the precautions that his wife had exacted of him.

So, the night before, the two women had proceeded across country to Lagny from which place Madame Ney had dispatched a note to the Baron begging him to be there in the Little Luxembourg close to the Closerie des Lilas—a spot which at the early hour of nine might be trusted to be entirely deserted. At the same time H  l  ne

de Frèjus had written to George Feilding begging him to pack sufficient clothes for a possibly long journey and to proceed by a roundabout way to the inn of the Closerie des Lilas itself, where he should wait unobserved until, the interview with de Frèjus being closed and their plans decided, they should come for him in the berline.

Madame Ney and she had had the vague scheme of their driving to Belgium as an English couple with French friends and there embarking for England, where Ney imagined that he had admirers sufficient to secure him from molestation. Or they might even proceed to the Americas!

Beside her on the seat, with the whole world crumbled to pieces around them, the Marshal made a slight, as if ruminant sound. He had come to an end of his meditations.

"There remain then the Americas!" he said. "I do not believe that the Bourbons dare exile me. Or even the Allies! But I prefer to exile myself!"

She sighed a little. The prolonged absence of Madame Ney was beginning to cause her misgivings. . . . Supposing she had indeed been followed by men presenting the appearance of spies? She would undoubtedly walk down into Paris. But what would they do? How should they rejoin her?

Ney asked: "The English are still at war with their colonists? Or are they their colonists?"

She answered: "No, they are no longer their colonists. Surely you remember Lafayette. But I do not know whether they are still at war. I remember dimly to have

heard that they signed a peace on Christmas day of last year. . . . But hostilities still continued on Christmas day of last year. There were some Americans in Lyons—a banker and his daughter—Coleman by name. They were pleasant people. They had a relative killed at sea on Christmas day—or he died on Christmas day. I remember the name of the ships that fought: they were the *President* and the *Endymion*—the *Endymion* was a ship the English had taken from us.”

“It is amazing, all that you know,” the Marshal said. “You are a gazette that walks . . . our gazette: the Princess’s and mine!”

“I remember these things more particularly,” she said. “because during the days the Emperor stayed at Lyons we were thrown much together with the English and Americans that were there. A young man—but George Feilding: you know him—saved the life of the American Mr. Coleman’s daughter. And indeed mine. Or at any rate he saved us from brutal handling by a mob. We should not have talked English in the streets. . . . But Mr. Coleman, the American, and his English brother were grateful. So we saw them often.”

She found it intolerable to talk of these things and not to know whether George Feilding had indeed been arrested. The English Mr. Coleman had been of opinion—at Lyons, and in Paris too—that George Feilding ran some risk. The American brother had been certain that George would be shot by his compatriots and begged him to take refuge in their estate in America, lauding its amenities and comforts. The Coleman young girl had been woefully in love with George Feilding. Tears had



filled her eyes whenever she had looked at him and heard he was in danger.

The Marshal said with a lowered voice:

"Tell me, now, truly. . . . Did He . . . at Malmaison . . . Napoleon . . . indeed send me friendly messages. You know how his dispatches spoke of me. But if he repented of them . . . My wife says he spoke with affection. And that he invited me to go with him to the Americas. . . . Is that all true? Madame Ney is all for reconciling differences. He had, she said, some idea of enterprises there, that we could share in!"

She said that, in very good truth, Madame Ney had in no way exaggerated and that there had been an unusual warmth of manner attending his Majesty's words.

"And he called me again *le plus brave des braves* and said he had misjudged me at Mont St. Jean. . . . Why, then . . . do you not see?"

His manner was animated but became clouded for a moment again.

"Do you suppose," he lowered his voice to ask, "that he had heard of my speeches in the Chamber? Against resistance to the Allies. . . . Why . . . I hope Madame Ney herself has not heard. . . . It would appear that I was in the wrong. . . . But I tell you, dearest Hélène, I was infuriated: maddened! . . . How could my actions at Mont St. Jean be misinterpreted? . . . I fought like one possessed. Five horses—or I do not even know how many, but they tell me five—were killed beneath me. I was the last man on the battlefield. Long after nightfall I was laying about me with my sword. . . . What could I do but think that all was lost? Who



would not have thought that all was lost? . . . And was I, after the insults he had showered on me, to bow my neck again beneath his yoke? . . . It is true he besought to be allowed to fight as a private soldier . . . But who could keep him down? Was it to be thought of . . . ?”

He stretched out a finger and imploringly touched her hand.

“My dearest Hélène,” he said huskily, “I beg you not to misjudge me. I *thought* all was lost. How could I accept the figures that his brother Lucien gave to the Chamber? I cried out that he lied. And lied. And lied! I admit that clouds of blood obscured my eyes. I am told that I struck someone . . . Drouet, I believe, or another that opposed me. But I desired peace madly. I could not endure that hopeless battles should be fought on French territory. . . .”

He stopped, panting, and wiped his face repeatedly. He fidgeted wildly on the bench. Finally he sat looking with intense gloom at the gravel of the path—bending forward.

“Well,” he said, “it would appear that I have once again restored the Bourbons as I did when I went with Macdonald to negotiate after the treachery of Marmont.” He tried to look at her but could not.

“I alone!” he said. “But do not think that because of that I will now curry favour with the Bourbons and the contemptible Ultras. I say to you: ‘Perish the thought!’—the very thought!—I acknowledge that I was wrong. . . . Lucien Bonaparte’s figures were correct. . . . The case of France was not so desperate! . . . This

the battle of Mont St. Jean might have been to France what the battle of Cannæ was to Rome, not what that of Zama was to Carthage!" . . . He went on to pour out figures. By the 27th of June Grouchy, having driven Thielmann the Prussian nearly to Brussels was at Laon with thirty-five thousand men, of whom seven thousand were cavalry. Thirty-five thousand more had joined him there. Another twenty-five to thirty were on the march from Paris to him. Rapp would have been there in ten days with another twenty-five. . . . There were one hundred and twenty thousand men: and after the battle of Mont St. Jean the English had not ninety thousand men in the field. Would they have dared to cross the Somme? The Austrians and Russians could not have reinforced with more than thirty thousand men and that not till the middle of July!

In Paris there were five hundred field-pieces; for its defence it had thirty-six thousand national guards; thirty thousand riflemen, six thousand gunners and six hundred pieces of heavy ordnance in the batteries; formidable entrenchments were erected on the right bank of the Seine and those on the left were nearly completed. Suchet had more than thirty thousand men at Lyons besides the garrison of the town; the defence of the fortified places was such as could be relied on, they being commanded by selected officers and by troops noted for their fidelity. . . . He went on and on, his voice attaining to a certain rhythm. He had undoubtedly studied that lesson day-long and night-long.

"They should have given the command of those forces to me!" he broke off to exclaim; "I should have evolved

a plan of campaign that would have driven Wellington and his Blücher into the North Sea!"

Hélène's heart moved in her breast with relief. Madame Ney's black was coming slowly towards them. She held her right hand up at arm's length, its palm towards them, for they had started up. She motioned to them: "Sit down!" and looked several times fearfully behind her.

"Mind!" Ney whispered, "I would not for the world have you tell my wife what I have been saying to you—nor to any other soul. You are sympathetic and secret. . . . Why, but my wife is sympathetic too . . . but I would not have her think that I . . . betrayed France. . . . My power was too great: my eloquence was overwhelming. But I was hasty. . . . I loved peace, liberty, and France too well. . . . And it appears that I have given to my beloved France a White Terror! . . . So there remains only the Americas! But I have a scheme!"

Madame Ney approached them.

"Let us hasten to the carriage!" she exclaimed. "I think . . . nay, I am sure that I am not followed." She had thought several times that men had followed her so she had made long detours in the fields towards the faubourg of St. Michel. But all that countryside was empty now! They had gone to see the new sun rise!

Ney had crushed her in an enormous embrace. He cried:

"Pardon me for having left the carriage! It appears it was dangerous. It appears that there is in truth a White Terror! But I was overwrought with anxiety on your account."

With her white face crushed to his shoulder she cried:  
"Let us hurry! Let us hurry!"

He pushed her from him and held her, his two great hands on her shoulders.

"Listen!" he said, his face all lit up. "I have a scheme. We go to Rochefort and effect an alliance with the Emperor. From there we sail to the Americas. It is said—dear Hélène here says!—that there they have a ravishing climate; white houses like those of France but with porticos; cotton-fields; plantations of sugar cane, slaves! . . . I have never had a slave. I shall dress mine—yours!—in the Moskwa livery!"

She said: "I beg you to hurry. . . . I beseech you to hurry to the carriage!" He held her however and continued:

"You have not heard my scheme. It is this: We go from here to Rochefort. There we join with him—the Emperor. With him we sail to the Americas. It appears that the Americas are always at war with the English. Whom could they better take as leaders than Bonaparte and myself! . . . We will build such a fleet and raise such a multitude of men that we will sweep the English into France and broom them and the Bourbons all together into the Mediterranean! What say you to that?"

"But Marshal," she said, "The Emperor will already have sailed from Rochefort. And such an expedition will need long preparing. There are too the children to be considered. I ask, myself, nothing better than to go overseas, and America appears to be truly an earthly paradise. . . . And you have even no pass. The roads will be full of soldiery."

"And since when," he asked, "since when does Marshal Ney, Prince of the Moskwa, Duke of Elchingen, need a safe-conduct to travel the roads of France and pass through French soldiery?"

She said: "Come now! Come now! We must debate all this in the carriage. . . . You have the pass that Fouché gave you to travel to the South and East of Paris. Maybe the Baron de Frèjus shall get you another to travel to the West. . . . Or if we cannot come to a port in the West we will find one elsewhere. . . ."

He was induced at last to go back to the carriage, but all the way he talked of his scheme and his plan for the campaign of England. Hélène went with them as far as the carriage door. Further she would not go for she said that she must await George Feilding. She begged them to drive as far as the other carriage, then to take that and to send this back to her with Schultheiss the faithful Alsatian. So they went.

She walked waveringly over the bright grass, her eyes blurred with tears; for, once the Neys were safely gone, her own griefs descended upon her like curtains that blotted the light of the sun. She saw no alleviation: she did not believe that George Feilding would come to the Closerie but there she must wait another hour or more. That was the safer way.

No, there was no George Feilding in the little inn. There was no one, and the light shone through the door that gave onto the orchard in the rear—upon complete quietude. Looking out from that door she could see, beneath an apple-laden tree, the young hostess with her



baby asleep in a bassinet on the grass at her feet and a grey kitten on her lap—knitting grey wool. Her husband, the tapsters and the serving maids of whom the establishment employed a great many in the evenings when the Parisians came to take the air and in spring to smell the lilacs—all those people, no doubt attracted by the rejoicing cannon, had gone to see what was to be seen in the distant city.

Here then were peace, happiness, domesticity—within sound of the cannon! She imagined the Americas to be like that—but with a greater elegance! The Americas had a climate of a halcyon complexion; American residences and estates were of a splendour of arrangement and appointment such as war-torn France could not be expected to know. Above all, in the American nights, the moon shone enormous above light mists, cicadas, called katydids, sang in the treetops and the slaves from their lit-up cabins in the distance. . . . And it appeared that you could get up a homesickness for the American countryside and modes of life—for the routs, the races, the assemblies, for the light-hearted gallantry of the men and the beauty and gaiety of the girls and women!—you could attain to such a homesickness as no denizen of the poor, mixedly populated, tyrant-ridden and war-racked countries of the Old World could know. . . . All that she had from the Coleman girl.

Here there were domesticity and happiness—but of the homespun order. The hostess of the Closerie des Lilas sat on a rush stool, her back against the trunk of an apple tree, dressed in a shapeless frock of black percale, her feet in grey woollen stockings and great sabots. . . .



There, you would have, not a kitten in your lap, but a greyhound couched at your side, a beau, not a bassinet at your feet, silvered sandals with cross-tapes of gold lace. . . . So at least Bessie Coleman had made them believe, and her father, the merchant-planter-banker, asserted that in North Carolina the women were surely spoiled. . . . Well, till that morning the dream had persisted. It had hardly faded till half an hour ago!

She sank down on a wooden bench that ran along the passageway between door and door. It was cool with the slight drafts of the July noon—and shadowed! And from there she could see not only the hostess but the green-sward between the tavern and the entrance to the Little Luxembourg. That the hostess had had no tidings or note from George Feilding Hélène knew; for she had been there an hour ago to ask and the hostess had promised to bring into the Little Luxembourg any tidings or note that came. So there she might sit. She was in no case to play the great and gracious lady to the modest and ingenuous young woman that sat a-knitting or to tap the baby's cheeks with an elegant finger-nail. . . .

How was it possible then that a whole fabric of life could fall to pieces and unravel in ten minutes? Almost, you might say, merely because of the sound of cannon. . . . For it had begun with the sound of cannon. They had thought that morning when they had first come to that garden that Louis XVIII was at least at three days' distance. . . . But her companion had been able to tell from the distant sound that the cannon were unshotted. So it must be salutes that they were firing!

They had expected to have three days or more in which

they could prepare for their voyage—their flight! . . . But ah, they had hurried, those Ultra-Loyalists! They well might! Even for wolves a night cometh. They might well hasten to flesh their teeth. Her cousin Clermont-St. Cyr had not many years to live to judge by his palsied, flushed and distressed condition. Nor his brother, the Marquis! Nor yet her own father who was too decrepit to leave England but now kept up a monstrous state near Twickenham on the banks of the Thames. She regarded it as a sin that she disliked her father, and fought against it. But even to her Royalist eye her father was pompous, mean and insupportable. He had begged of George's father and a dozen others; he had driven her mother into a paralytic seizure from which she had never emerged fully and had peacocked it about with ruffles and canes till he made Versailles and the eighteenth century, to the traditions of which he professed to cling, seem one moth-eaten satin absurdity after the other. Even when they had had but one salt herring and three potatoes between the three of them she had been forced after meals to kneel at his gouty feet, kiss his swollen and icy hands, round which the ruffles tickled her nose, and thank him for the repast. . . . Still, one should honour one's parents. No one had been more thankful than she to escape from her parents' roof in the little house in Edwardes Square, for the Marquis had made a point of tormenting her by every meanness that was at his disposal in order that her bed-ridden and beloved mother might be the more effectually tormented. There had been no other way to look at it.

So that no sooner had she been married to Frèjus than she had begged him to use all the influence that he had

to remove her mother too from the Edwardes Square establishment; and Frèjus having put the matter to Squire Feilding, the Squire had very effectually intervened with the simple device of threatening to cut off all supplies from the Marquis if that nobleman did not consent to his wife's being removed to a middle-class establishment of some worthy people. There she had had every attention that they—or indeed Squire Feilding himself—could devise.

Thus Hélène had had the saddest of possible childhoods and the most muted of early girlhoods and joint lives—for indeed the marriage with Frèjus had been no marriage; she had fully done her duty by him in adorning his halls and enabling him to fill them with splendid throngs of glittering beings and their womanhood. It was true that he had supported till lately a crowd of her parasitic relatives and their friends, but it had been by no will of hers; and indeed latterly—after they had left England for Genoa—she had persuaded the good-natured man to cut off all supplies from the St. Cyrs, Périgords, Fleuranges and the rest. And this had raised the contempt and hatred that they had never been chary of expressing for her husband even whilst their wolves' teeth were devouring his victuals—this deprivation had raised the expression of their envy and hatred to the most open thing in the world. They had imagined that, whilst they were now in a position to plunder France under the ægis of Louis XVIII, they would continue to enjoy the fat pickings of the Frèjus fortune as well, as a sort of agreeable perquisite. . . . And half of her cousin's glee over his paper in the rue St. Honoré had, she had been aware, been due to

hatred that had now transferred itself to her too. She had never put herself out to conceal her contempt for them and her determination to shield her easy-going husband from their depredations. . . . Now they had come back.

## CHAPTER THREE

THEY had come back and they had Frèjus in their power!

But she heard George Feilding ask if the Baroness de Frèjus were not there—in French. She had not considered that he had so English an accent! Another voice said—in English—that they must take some refreshment if it were to be had there. They had ridden for ten hours and their nags would not take them even into Paris. The hostess had looked up and said to a standing, invisible man that Hélène was not there.

She was out in the sunlight, leaning back against the wall of the house; supporting herself against the wall of the house with hands that seemed desirous of digging into the brickwork and then desisted!

This was intolerable: her weary brain must be flogged into thinking. Had both those two men—George and her husband—been arrested there would have been a space in which to think. Now there was not even Aglaë to consult: Aglaë and her husband were a-galloping in a swaying chaise. She had been certain George Feilding had been put under arrest. It was unaccountable.

How could he have ridden for ten hours? He had promised not to leave his apartment in the rue du Bac until he heard from her. What errand could have taken him so far from her? A sharp pang went through her! The Colemans with their bread-and-butter daughter were at Dijon.

. . . But to go or return from Dijon he would have had to pass through Montereau. Besides, he was faithful!

But if he were not under arrest she was not at liberty to think of him. He became the unthinkable! One must think only of the other man, filling—nearly filling, glooming in—a little cell in the Conciergerie. Or maybe the Ab-baye! What did it matter? She had to think of personal linen, of sheets, of providing napkins with the Frèjus coronet with which the tray bringing in the bottles and dishes of his repasts should be covered.

She envisaged the tray. Well, the pastry-cook could provide the tray. Well, now: a bottle of Clos Vougeot for the Baron de Frèjus: a Strasburg paté, the crust gilt: half a roast fowl. The Baron should have his own silver hot-water dishes with parcel-gilt covers!

And Monsieur le Baron would need counsel and encouragement. Tenderness too! Well, he took counsel with no one but Madame herself! Encouragement from none other! . . . Tenderness? . . . well, there was none other to give it him.

She remembered his moments of discouragement. He would sit, crouched forward in his chair—a very Achilles retired to his tent. There had of course been such moments. All men have them constantly, women practically never since they cannot afford them. She would lean over him, probing at the secret springs of his melancholy, indicating the more cheerful elements of his case. But now he must be more discouraged than ever before he had been. Then . . .

Then he could not be abandoned at a moment when he had achieved an act of cool gallantry! . . . Because



there would not have been another man in ten thousand who would so quickly have grasped the misunderstanding of those others. There was no other man who would not have sprung up and cried: "But you fools, I am the Baron de Frèjus!" and gone free.

You do not in any case betray your husband when he is in jail. That is not done: that is not thinkable. Not when he is imprisoned for your Cause. Women in those days—women in any day very likely—gave themselves to the first man that came along and threw the handkerchief. Not she! . . . There was perhaps a special cause for that. She had, in effect, more to give than other women, so she might well charily select the man to whom she should give what she had to give! . . . But was it then to be thinkable that she would commit an action that the lowest of women would scarce commit? For even the *maréchaux* of France seldom gave themselves to their lovers whilst their lords were actually on the battlefield. They would await the army's going into cantonments or the signing of an armistice. . . . After all, it would be disagreeable to discover that you had been in your lover's arms whilst your husband lay out on a field, the prey to crows!

By analogy, this was the same thing. Frèjus had entered on a battle—and if the drunken Ultras had really begun a White Terror, Frèjus was in more danger than most marshals of France—except perhaps the Prince of the Moskwa—on the battlefield. . . . That was the dreadful thought. It was insupportable! If Frèjus was not at that moment freed on the discovery of error, his head was as certain to fall as leaves must fall from the trees in autumn. He was fallen, he was solitary, he was unbefriended by a

soul and he was of such wealth that all the crows in the world must fly to the Conciergerie for a share in the pickings. He was no Marshal of France. Had Michael Ney been in prison, a hundred thousand voices would have clamoured for his release, a hundred thousand swords would have itched in their scabbards. But this man—this erring, passionate, clumsy, great child!—had, if you looked at it coolly, done more to inconvenience the Allied Enemies than several Neys. . . . He had thus made thousands of embittered enemies—but who will befriend a financier when he is fallen? Then . . .

If they did not exact his life? . . . What then? . . . He must pass the rest of it in jail. . . . His need of personal linen, Clos Vougeot, *foie gras*, counsel, companionship, tenderness would become lifelong. A wife, even a wife in name alone, who has once shown tenderness or looked out napkins for the trays, cannot then withdraw those solaces. . . . Nay, she must tenfold increase her vigillances. She must wait continually beneath the prison walls for the chance to minister: for her there could be no nights in a lover's arms!

Leaning back, grasping at the bricks of the wall with her fingers, she stared wanly at the bright grass. Then the magic of her lover overwhelmed her. . . . He was a green-grass sort of fellow, galloping across turf to meet aligned and innumerable foes! His deeds of passion and splendour were not done slinking in the tall rooms of vanished nobles. He stood in the open, splendid and with backbone erect, bidding Fate aim what bolts she would at him. His voice was trumpet music; you could no more resist the brightness of his eyes then that of the sun; when

he smiled your heart turned within you; your limbs trembled before his pleas; your soul fainted for need of his arms about you. . . . What, then, was a poor maiden who had never known lover to do?

She had stood spellbound, incapable of urgently needed action, merely to look at his face!

It had been in Lyons, when he had saved their lives. He had stood a little out from the end wall of a *cul-de-sac*, with herself and the little Coleman girl behind him. He was bestriding an immense fellow with a cracked head; a mob, bottled between the narrowly parted high house-fronts, raising fists to the distant sky and ululating. There were foul-looking creatures in the *culs-de-sac* of Lyons as of Paris; parcels of livid grey rags with livid grey features that never crept out to see the light save in moments of disaster and of civil strife. It had been fortunate that the place being paved there had been no stones!

They should not have gone to inspect the silk-weavers in that suburb of Lyons. What was the name of the suburb? It ran into the hill of the . . . the Croix-Rousse? So that they had had their backs against the rock down which vines ran their tendrils. Vines giving a good wine, called . . . she could not remember the name. They should not have gone; or having gone they should not have talked English. But little Elizabeth Coleman had known no French. The pattern of the silk the old weaver had been at work upon had been such as no little American girl could resist crying out at; scarlet parrots, azure parrots; scrolls; pomegranates, all on a black ground. . . . She could see the bright colours before her there . . . unimaginable labour; the piece taking four years in

the making and destined for the Dey of Algiers. In a dark room . . .

When they had emerged there had been a crowd before the door . . . growling like hounds. They had cried: "Filthy English! Betrayers of the Emperor!" Their own voices had been drowned.

It had been admirable the way in which George had handled the matter: Gatti di Vivario had told the truth when he had said that in any danger she would be safe behind George Feilding's right arm. He naturally had out his immense sword which made a half-circle round them, but an immense fellow, his head bound in a handkerchief, with an immense club had nevertheless advanced out of the crowd. But he had had no chance to use his club: his club was lying on the cobbles and in a second the club was in George's hands and George had handed his sword to her. It had been difficult to see, it had gone so quick. He appeared to have brought the flat or the blunt back of his blade down on the fellow's fore-arm. The fellow had howled aloud. In the silence that fell upon the crowd George had said to her: "We do not want to shed any blood! The Emperor does not wish it!" He was quite calm and good-natured, smiling a little, his white upper teeth set lightly on his red lip, gazing before him as if at landscape whose details he designed to memorize.

The big fellow who had been hurt pushed roaring back amongst his fellows: a man with a bayonet on an old musket lunged. His bayonet was pushed aside by the cudgel that was now George's. She heard George say: "If you do that again I shall hit you on the head!" The man ungued with his bayonet again: George hit him on the

head. The musket fell to the ground; the man cast up his arms and fell sideways. George strode across him. He cried out in French:

"If any more desire putting to sleep, I am a great putter to sleep. Advance! This way, gentlemen!"

The crowd was silent a moment, hearing him cry out in French. Then she should have spoken: she was upon the step of the house from which they had emerged; she could then have harangued the crowd. But she could not. She was aware that she was so full of desire for this hero with the bright varnished cheeks, the hardly heaving chest and the bright eyes. Here was Perseus bestriding the Dragon. She was filled with the desire that he should cast her over his shoulder, forge his way through the vanishing crowd and disappear with her into the Olympus where demi-gods pursue their amours and their bliss! The fellow upon the ground made a good head for the dragon, the dragon's tail being the crowd.

The little American girl beside her knees uncovered her bright little eyes and said:

"You should speak to them! Oh, you should speak to them!"

It was then too late. The growling had recommenced because a man had cried out:

"He is nevertheless a filthy Englishman. I have fought against that uniform!"

George advanced; his cudgel hammered on hands, on shoulders. A man with one eye—the man who had called out—was the next to fall. He had attempted to get at George with a flail, whirling first the beater round his head.



As they had advanced she had mounted another doorstep. The crowd had again fallen silent to see another of their leaders on the ground. The little American girl in her high-breasted print dress had whimpered again:

"Speak to them! You speak to them. . . . Else they will kill him . . . kill him! I should not mind dying but they must not kill him!"

Hélène had not been able to speak: her throat had been closed. She was aware that she craved to see him drive that rabble before him unaided. To have aided him would have been to detract from his glory and his punishing strength. . . . He made a sudden rush; the crowd ran from him, he after them. When they came up to him, the crowd was out in the boulevard, he closing the mouth of the alley. He said to the little American girl:

"Pull my whistle from my pocket by the cord. Put it to my lips!"

Bessie Coleman fumbled at the cord that went from his shoulder to his pocket. She was panting with emotion. A stone pushed George's shako aside on his head. They had found some stones in the boulevard. George's arm—the left one—was evidently powerless at his side. It had been struck no doubt by a great stone that lay at his feet. If he, Hélène, had tried to extract the whistle she would not have fumbled!

He could not blow the whistle without holding it; he could not drop his cudgel to hold the whistle. It was Bessie Coleman who held it to his lips while it fluted and piped quick notes: "At the double! At the double!"

The crowd drew back further, puzzling at the sound, round the mouth of the alley, their mouths mostly gaping.



The sergeant-major of Gatti di Vivario with a corporal and four files of men came up at the double; the crowd had melted. They went into the bright sun of the boulevard after the shadow of the alley. It had been Bessie Coleman who had made a sling for George's arm with the printed fichu she had round her neck.

She asked herself as she now leant against the wall of the Closerie des Lilas—what accounted for her impulse to cruelty? She knew that, though she yearned for him with every fibre of her body when they were apart—and indeed when they were together!—yet she had always in his presence refused herself to him with every species of cruelty. Yet she had kissed with the fervour of a priest at altar the spot where his hand had rested on a marble mantel-shelf in the great salon of the Frèjus mansion! Why, now! Merely because she had heard his voice she had avoided him! Yet a moment before she had desired to pillow his mournful head upon her breast! . . . “Come rest on my bosom, my own stricken deer!” Beautiful words of an Irish poet!

Indeed she did not know herself in this connexion. Girls should be modest and at times take refuge in flight. But in the great glass of the mirror above the very mantel-shelf that her lips had pressed she had once caught the sight of her face when he had been kneeling<sup>1</sup> at her feet, clasping her knees with both arms. And her face had had the queerest expression—of ecstasy, dread, glee, cruelty, the eyes half closed, the lips rigid. And the whole attitude one of withdrawal, of forbidding—drawing herself away, setting one shoulder higher than the other to get a greater

leverage, swaying to one side . . . Why, it had been as if something supernatural had peeped out of herself!

But how was it reasonable? . . . When he had gone she had cried because she had not given herself to him and had not promised to give herself to him. That very morning she had resolved on that thing. They were to have gone away with Aglaë and her Michael, divorce or no divorce or to await a divorce. She had pictured the countrysides flashing beside their carriage; she had felt his breath upon her cheek.

Now she was considering in what words she should again dismiss him.

There was no doubt that part of her mind was doing that. Phrases were coming up— "With a husband in prison . . ." "Who has the greater need of comfort . . ." "Cannot the young wait, having the strength . . ." But she was not one to rehearse speeches at length!

She shuddered, going round the front of the house-end to see that long blank wall. When Frèjus had said to the general that that would be a good wall against which to shoot him she had had an extraordinary vision of Frèjus, extended on the ground, his arms spread above his head, towards her. She had even seen his high, curly black hat that had fallen to a distance. And the firing squad marching away.

It was absurd. Military executions are not carried out with such little ceremony, nor in such isolated spots. No government dare risk that. Nevertheless she shivered, going through the little archway that through the wall gave access to the orchard.

There were two heavy men—or they appeared heavy, because of their voluminous riding cloaks. Their boots were dusty, their hats on the backs of their heads, the hands holding their riding crops depending almost to the ground. They had before them white wine in a green bottle. But although they had every appearance of fatigue they spoke one to the other with harshness and in contradictory tones. One exclaimed:

“Pish, pshaw! I have been master of the Quorn this many years now and if I do not turn my hunters to grass of a summer I will eat my own oats my own self!”

The other said: “Aye, and ball them, and blister them, and crack their feet getting them into hard condition again, and strain their legs with bending down to crop!”

The first speaker turned his face towards the house and so gave Hélène a view of his profile. He struck the table with his crop and bawled:

“Hostess! Hostess! The food!”

His face was leaner and browner—but it was Assheton Smith. Hélène said to him before he had looked at her:

“Where is George? Just now he was here!”

Both men started up and removed their hats. The other, with his silver head, sharp pickax nose, lean, red face and hard blue eyes was Squire Feilding, George’s father. He said:

“George is not here. George at least is safe. In a cavalry jail!”

It was George’s voice—but when you saw the man it sounded harsher. His eyes were like stones. Mr. Assheton Smith said:

“Hush, hush! Old friend!” From that she knew that the

Squire had, at any rate lately, been furiously angry. He turned indeed on Assheton Smith and exclaimed:

"There has been enough and to spare of this poppy-cock. I shall make an end of it!" He was very tall and spare of flesh but large-boned enough. The wine that he had been drinking on an empty stomach had no doubt flushed his face and clouded his brain. Hélène was used to think of him as a kindly man whom she could cajole frequently into small gifts or permissions. She knew he had a cruel tongue but upon her he had never used it, though she had seen him bring tears to George's eyes often enough with sneers at young follies of his. She remembered how George at fourteen had bought at a fair a pinchbeck watch with tin seals . . . His father had driven him to contemplate suicide!

Well, he could not do it now! . . . She saw George—just as she had earlier seen Frèjus—in a cell, leaning on a table, pondering. An intolerable yearning to comfort him began to insert itself into her mind. She imagined great, sooty cross-bars of iron barring a glassless window.

Squire Feilding foamed on—at Mr. Smith, for after the first glance he had not looked at her, keeping his face as if furiously averted. Hélène said to herself:

"You would think that this at least might have been spared me!"

"Is it, then, not enough?" the Squire cried. "I arrive in Paris to find my son jailed for a detestable, mean-spirited, mawkish treason. Before Hell I care nothing about soldiers or soldiering. . . . But to have my son at their mercy! Mine! *My son!* . . . And what has he to say for himself! Mumchance he stands between two scarlet-

coated oafs. And not a word! . . . Is it conceivable that I could have such a son?"

"Why," Mr. Assheton Smith said coolly, "he offered to aid you to cut the entail. . . . That was spirited enough for a boy standing on his stairs with a red-coat above and another below and you raving on the landing."

Mr. Feilding had as if a seizure of breathlessness; his chest heaved; he bent his head, swallowed convulsively and drew through his nostrils several immense breaths. Mr. Assheton Smith had turned his lean, brown face to Hélène. His eyes expressed concern and compunction.

"I would have spared you this if I could have," he said. "Madam, do not fear for the young man. He is under my protection!"

She considered fiercely. Here was another of these demi-gods, another of these enormous creatures who wreck worlds—or human lives that in themselves are whole worlds. No doubt George's body was safe under that ægis; but what about his humiliation, his disillusionment, his disbelief in humanity . . . his . . . his dishonour! But no! No! there was no dishonour! No dishonour! Whom could he not look in the face?—and her bosom awaited his aching head! Then . . .

Mr. Feilding shouted at the milor:

"Ask that trollop, that slut, where is the cuckold, her husband! Great God: is this not enough! Is this not enough? . . . Where is the man? He can neither keep his wife nor be where he should. Did we not send him courriers enough to announce our coming . . . Does he not desire our arrival? Did he not ask it?"

Hélène said: "Mr. Feilding!" She repeated with fury:



"Mr. Feilding! Mr Feilding!" for he continued spurting out words. Her eyes, she knew, sparkled with rage; the clenching of her hands drew her gloves insupportably tight. She stamped and stamped. . . . She exclaimed at last at Mr. Assheton Smith:

"I have felt gratitude to that man! Now I feel none. . . . He provided me with a dowry to wed a man that—poor man—is no man! . . . Then how do I owe him gratitude? You know well it was a crime done against me. I will not be called trollop nor strumpet: I am as pure as when I came from my mother's womb. Nor shall you call my husband a cuckold: the poor man is none: nor my lover a traitor. He is none!" she swallowed painfully but her brain was full of words: "Let that sot," she said, "take back his dowry and my husband his ouches and pearls and cabochons and emeralds, and let that man take his son's lands—and I will follow that man's beggared and calumniated son to the world's end in my shift. It was Mary Stuart said that: but I, I will do it, I, Hélène de Frèjus that will never be that more!"

Mr. Smith said earnestly:

"Don't say that! I beseech—I advise you not to dwell on . . ." He added suddenly: "Don't dwell on . . . on . . . the nature of your living . . . with those two men!" He said: "As yet the Squire has not heard you. He would mean accept the situation if . . . if, say, the worst . . ."

He mopped his brow with a black handkerchief that had scarlet and green patterns in its silk.

"Before God," he said, "I was never yet in a situation that made me want for words!"



Mr. Feilding was coming out of another convulsion; in panting for breath he turned his eyes, bloodshot and fixed on the girl. She then addressed him—for it was he that she desired to pain.

"Father!" she said. "You call yourself a father and acquiesce at the first offset with those that would pour dishonour on your son. . . . And on me! You who are acquainted with my sainted, my martyred mother! You come to me from the country where that saint lies and call dishonourable names me who was brought up at her knee. It is amazing that you dare look me in the face. . . ." He was indeed, now, leaning back on the table, his eyes bloodshot and fixed on her as if he saw a vision—shaken, dishevelled and appalled. "Why," she said, "if you had a daughter . . . But you have no daughter. If then you had bastard daughters they might be what you have called me and lie with whom you will—your son or others. . . . It would well befit them!"

Mr. Feilding stretched out his hands, clawing the air, and swayed, leaning back on the table. He moaned inarticulately like a great beast in agony. Mr. Assheton Smith turned white under her eyes and said sharply:

"Madam! I beseech you. No more of that!"

"Why," she said to him, "this gentleman's words were inopportune. I wish no ill to his daughters. But he should not call me strumpet at the moment when they are both jailed—my husband and my lover!"

Mr. Feilding said feebly to Mr. Assheton Smith:

"You observe! She said 'my lover'!"

Mr. Smith began: "They have then arrested . . ."

Hélène however was talking, a thought compassionately, to that miserable-seeming squire.

"It would appear," she said, "that your worship was not in a position to hear me when I said lately that I . . ."

Mr. Smith interjected with urgency:

*"Pocas palabras.* Enough said. You will ruin . . ."

She continued however, remorselessly:

"I do not know what I should call your son, Mr. Feilding, if not my lover—since I love him with all my soul and so he loves me. Nor do I see why you should call me foul names. For I am sure that my husband in writing to you—and I presume you have hastened here at the urging of a letter from my husband—I am sure that my husband made no innuendoes against my honour. . . . So I beg you to finish this discussion. I am aware that in your country a man is accounted a simpleton or worse who marries his mistress. That maybe is why I never consented to become your son's mistress. Or I do not know. I was debating upon that with myself when I heard your voice and thought it was your son's. But your son will be in that respect no simpleton if he marries me, for in truth I am no mistress of his. . . ."

"It would kill your mother!" the squire muttered suddenly. "It would kill . . . Assheton, tell her it would kill her mother. . . ."

Assheton Smith raised his crop and beat the air hesitatingly.

"I would rather," he said, "infinitely, that we went on debating on the topic of turning hunters out to grass in

the summer, though you had become plaguily ill-tempered already over that. . . . And this is no time . . .”

“It is no time for hunters, in the name of God,” Hélène said. “But I am sure it would kill my mother. She is against divorces. But this would be no divorce, there being no marriage. . . .”

Mr. Assheton Smith suddenly interrupted her.

“Child,” he said, “you are talking beside the mark!” He then addressed the other man with great earnestness.

“Squire,” he said, “you and I have not half enough debated this matter to let you settle it with this girl. . . .”

The squire mumbled: “More than enough of your talk of Egypt and the like. . . . It would kill her mother.”

“Why,” Mr. Assheton Smith said, “we old fellows have done harm enough to these young ones. I am not one to cry over spilt milk. But I cannot conceal from myself that in my desire for knowledge I have run your son into a plaguy awkward position. Whatever Wellington may say—and you heard him!—I will save him from the firing squad. No Duke nor Devil shall say me nay!”

Hélène said: “O Heaven! You have seen the Duke of Wellington!”

“We rode,” he answered deferentially, “we rode, Madam, Hell-for-Leather from the young man’s rooms to the Duke’s office in the Tuileries. I had sworn to release the young man *instantér*. But the Duke would not. He is a damned, cold, unrelenting ramrod and has a great case against your . . . against the young man. I am even afraid it will come to a trial. But do not be alarmed. What the Duke will not do shall be done by a greater person-

age than he. Of that I assure you!" he spoke again to the Squire:

"So," he said, "I have injured the young man very sorely in truth—for as we are agreed our country will be no place for him now, nor in many years—or ever. He must to the greenwood go: that is sure. And if he consent to cut the entail he may well and start again in a new world that no doubt has its *agréments*, or so they say. And if Madame la Baronne consent to share his exile, the least I can do, as having injured him, is to beseech you not to stand in their way; and the least you can do, as having injured . . . the other party, is to . . . I beg you to consider this! . . . to leave them in ignorance. I cannot be more plain. Bethink you of the pain you wish to inflict on these young and exiled things—the pain, the mortification, the despair!"

The Squire shook his head numbly.

"It would kill the marchioness!" he said.

"There is," Mr. Assheton Smith said, "no essential inconvenience in such marriages if the secret be kept. There are two cases you know well in your own country and they have proved agreeable, prosperous and productive unions. There is a case not a mile from my Quorn kennels that has all those characteristics. The youngsters I swear to you ride to hounds on ten-hand ponies like little devils—the pluckedest of the plucked. So I appeal to your humanity . . ."

The Squire shook and shook his head. Hélène exclaimed:

"Mr. Smith, this seems to be enough of talking and

too much. I do not know the meaning of your allocution though it appears to be benevolent. The fact is however that neither you nor Squire Feilding have any say in this matter. Till this moment I was in doubt whether my duty was towards my husband or my lover. From what you say of my lover's mournful case, he being fated for exile, unjust obloquy—what know I? . . . But this I know. From this place I go straight to the palace of the Cardinal Archbishop, and though he be busy he will see me for I have helped him much with stoles and albs and frontals. . . . And that will be the beginning of the end, for Rome will not refuse justice to a petitioner in my case. . . . I shall go there not because of violent haste or eagerness but so that my lover having news of it at the earliest moment in his dungeon may know that one faithful being watches beyond its walls!”

The hostess coming round the house-corner with a great tray of white earthen plates, bread, a great yellow omelette and knives, Hélène saw all these familiar objects bright with a melting sentiment that she was never again to know. . . . But her problem seemed at least settled; she had judged between the claimants to her cares, and the sight of the fair-haired hostess, a boy-child clinging to her apron, gave her new visions of a pleasant forest-and-champaign country where, a boy-child at her apron too, she should stand in her cabin door—they would be poor, poor—and watch the beloved figure in white with a great palmetto hat and a bare, manly throat, walk out from amongst great forest trees and across the glade come towards solace, union, and utter, utter contentment.

Mr. Feilding, looking at her with doomed eyes, said with extreme slowness:

"Poor fool! The boy . . ."

She heard Assheton Smith give a hoarse cry and saw him start towards the other.

Mr. Feilding completed slowly:

"The boy is your brother!"

There was no surprise: the thought she was aware had been for ever at the back of her mind. Nevertheless her knees gave way beneath her and she fell in blackness to the ground.





PART

III





## CHAPTER ONE

**G**EORGE FEILDING paced furiously up and down a small section of an immense carpet in a great, mournful room. The great furniture, the *bergères*, divans, day-beds and simple chairs were alike shrouded in druggery; like an immense, a supernaturally gigantic pear made of grey sheeting, the great lustre depended from the centre of the ceiling. The great mirrors that went all round the walls had that cold air of grey-blue steel mirrors have that for long have reflected neither the master of the house nor his guests; the white statues of Hebes and Niobes appeared chill and yellowing. The windows gazed on an irregularly shaped courtyard whose naked tree dripped great goutts of moisture though the rain was over.

He tore furiously at a red-worsted and gold bell-pull that depended beside the marble of the mantel. On the right side of the fire-place was a great bust upon a green marble pedestal: it showed a bull-nosed, great-necked man, very décolleté until the marble ended in the rolls of a marble blanket; on the left was a bust, not quite so large and in bronze of a young woman.

Long, long after, a short-skirted, deftly slippered maid, in black with a black apron, flitted deftly round an opening door and stood holding the handle of blown glass. He cried out:

“Madame la Baronne . . . Madame de Frèjus. Is she not returned? This is intolerable.”

"She stays often," the maid said, "till late, late into the night with Monsieur le Baron. At the Conciergerie!"

He lugged impetuously from his fob a net purse that jingled. He poured guinea after guinea into his palm.

"Listen," he said; "you are at least human, made-moiselle." She was a dark girl, her hair parted in the middle and topped by the small cap and the huge black ribbons that give to the Alsaciennes their proud and graceful gait. She sighed and her dark eyes were soft.

"I entreat you," the young man said, "I beseech you as you hope to savour the joys of love: that you will conceal me in a closet or put me in an alcove where Madame de Frèjus shall pass. Bethink yourself. . . . Calumnies have driven her to deny me her society . . . I was lately a prey to calumnies. But now I am cleared. . . . Heavens! But that cannot be the reason! She was a witness to all my actions that were questioned!"

"I am glad that you do not offer me gold!" the girl said. "Monsieur's entreaties would move me far more. Monsieur's entreaties move my heart itself. They would move a heart of stone. But no emotions at this moment could induce me to depart from the orders of my beloved mistress!"

"Then you admit," he cried out, "that this infamous cruelty is commanded by Madame Ney—for you are the servant of Madame Ney, not of Madame de Frèjus. But what can Madame Aglaë have against me? It is but a short time since we were to have crossed the world to go into a common exile. . . . And I have worked for the Prince her husband. Even cloistered up . . ."

He suddenly changed the tone of his entreaty, speaking much faster.

"See," he cried out. "Here is gold. Good guineas . . ."

She exclaimed with singular passion: "No, no, sir. It is ungenerous thus to tempt and torture a poor girl."

He answered, however: "Listen child; let me speak. It is Madame Ney that I beg you to ask to see me, no other. You have no orders against that."

She twisted her fingers in her apron. She had no specific orders against that but merely general orders that her mistress would see no one on that day save Mr. Assheton Smith and a banker on business.

"Then run, child, run," he exclaimed; "take the gold; it shall help you the sooner to marry your sweetheart." She wavered and then went.

He fumbled for his belt in the pouch of which he had kept usually letters or documents of great importance. He swore between his teeth. That accursed habit would never leave him. He had been a week out of uniform and was dressed in the fantastically modish bottle-green clothes that Mr. Assheton Smith had ordered for him whilst he had been in confinement. Nay, he had not worn a belt during the four months that that confinement had lasted. There came into his mind the singular accent of the old captain of the 42d Highlanders who at the Court Martial had asked, after the conclusion of the evidence of each of the witnesses:

"Wass Cahptn Feilding weering hiss uniform? Did you effer see him not in hiss uniform?"

The old man had asked it so often that it had become a humorous burden to the days the interminable trial had



lasted. In effect it had saved, if not George's life, then at least what small share of his honour he was regarded as retaining. But only Elizabeth Coleman and her uncle had noticed that he was then not wearing a belt and had answered:

"Yes, he had a uniform similar to that he now wears, but with a belt." Elizabeth Coleman had a queer, clear enunciation as if she took pains to keep all her words spaced apart. At the trial the English banker-uncle had been generous to him. In Lyons they had debated very hotly as to the propriety of his being with the Emperor's forces. He and the uncle had parted at night frequently with great anger so that Hélène had been depressed, for she had foreseen the Court Martial. But in his evidence Mr. Coleman had slurred all that very nicely over, dwelling only on the fact that George had insisted that England was not at war with France and, even if she had been, he could not have done otherwise than follow the Napoleonic expedition, he being a prisoner on parole.

As for Elizabeth Coleman she had delivered a queer, unstoppable American-rebel oration which the honourable Court—the colonel, the major, the two elderly captains and the second lieutenant—had had to listen to in embarrassment, for they only half understood what she said and did not know how to silence a young female; whilst owing to dislike for the Bourbons the prosecuting captain found his task already so distasteful that he was certainly not going to check her if the honourable Court was inclined to listen.

George Feilding even smiled at the memory. The girl's point of view was, for a democrat, so enthusiastically Im-

perialist, inasmuch as Napoleon was his people's choice whereas the Allies in the name of Liberty had revived the long-exploded doctrine of the divine right of kings. She got that in apropos of George's ignorance of the fact that his country had declared war—for how could he even conceive of the possibility that an obese monster could be inflicted on a people of whose madly enthusiastic loyalty to their Emperor he had evidence every day? That was unthinkable!

These Christian kings, he remembered her saying, did not propose to kill Bonaparte himself, nor did they in so many words offer a reward for his head, dead or alive; they were like the Quaker who would not kill his dog but only give him a bad name. He accordingly cried "Mad dog!" so that the first man it met killed it. This, coming after the enthusiastic panegyric on George's valour in saving her and Hélène from the mob, and being uttered with tears in her eyes and, indeed, between sobs, had seemed so curious an illustration that the honourable court had dissolved in laughter and relief.

The truth is that the whole affair had been extremely distasteful to the Court. The war was by then sufficiently long over, the actions of the Royalists, the wholesale arrests and murders, the assassination of Marshal Brune, the arrest of Ney—the whole dreary and ignoble process of the White Terror, disinclined even the senior officers for a trial that seemed much of a type with the others. The Court Martial that was to try Ney had not then yet declared itself incompetent, but it was said that Masséna, and even Augereau, had so audibly, if in private, expressed their distaste at their occupation that there could

be no doubt as to the results of the trial. And although Feilding was not Ney, the colonel of his regiment had spoken very generously of the gallantry of his behaviour in the Peninsular, the young girl had eulogized his courage in the blind alley at Lyons; his handing his sword to Hélène and using only a cudgel as an arm had given a very favourable impression both of his prudence and humanity; and above all his success in the duel with the chief fencing-master-inspector of the Imperial Army made him appear no mean soldier for a youngster. That last was a feat that no other man could lay to his credit. So that if he was not *le beau sabreur* himself he could be called no mean one, and it was attested by no less persons than Mr. Assheton Smith, the greatest connoisseur of duelling in the world—and by the fencing master himself. So that, but for the testimony of General Gorsin of Antibes and a couple of elderly Englishmen as to George's utterances at Cannes in the first flush of Napoleonic triumph, and but most of all for the imprudent eloquence of George's defender, a barrister whom Mr. Assheton Smith had brought over from London, and who addressed and bullied the Court and made attacks on the Duke of Wellington and his staff with the vulgar fervour of an Old Bailey criminal practitioner, the case might have been over very much sooner.

The want of generosity of the Duke of Wellington in refusing under a very shabby pretext to plead for the release of Ney, and the extreme severity of the nature of the confinement that he personally had ordered for Feilding, had already prejudiced the officers who made up the Court a little in George's favour. For it was absurd to

imagine that George, in the custody of officers of unspotted honour, could foment a plot amongst the subjects of the Bourbons, and although the Ultras amongst the Royalists actually had requested that George should be treated with special rigours of confinement, it was carrying subserviency to the divine right of the obese incumbent of the French throne more than a little too far to allow these singularly odious foreigners a voice in the treatment of themselves, His Majesty's Officers. That was one thing—but to allow an insolent fellow in a wig and gown to cast odium from his odiously gaping, almost radical mouth over the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief was carrying matters a little too far the other way. So that the comments from time to time uttered by one or other elderly member of the Court were at times singularly bitter and aged and disapproving of the counsel. That fellow was again and again hauled up for attempting directly to browbeat witnesses in cross-examination, whereas in a Court Martial all questions to witnesses must be put through the mouth of one or other member of the honourable Court. Indeed, during the cross-examination of General Gorsin, at the end of an unseemly quarrel with the presiding Colonel, the barrister, Sergeant Coffin, had violently cast off his wig and gown and had left the court.

It had fallen to George to cross-examine the General—and he did it with death in his heart. The memory of that dawn at Antibes came heavy over him with every glance at the General's hard blue eyes. He remembered himself on his horse, beneath the pines, the Mediterranean lapping on the sands close by; the bivouac fires of the little force and the tremendous glory of the little square man in

the white breeches and the green coat! And where was it all gone, and where was he? The very words of his mouth came back to him from the lips of that grim soldier: he could not allege that there was any exaggeration or even any added colouring. The General repeated the phrases in French and then made a halting translation into English, the Highland captain prompting him.

George had said: "*L'Empereur dont vous, vous-même avez porté les couleurs!*" " General Gorsin would report slowly as the words came back to his mind that George had asked him if he could blame him for wishing well to the Emperor whose cockade the general himself had worn.

But, in spite of his depression, he was not going to lose any ground that he could keep and, rather hoping against hope, he asked the General whether he had not said that he was under parole to Napoleon. He could not then remember to have said it but he hoped he had. The General however said that he had said nothing of the sort, nor anything like it.

The Colonel President, a white-moustached Fusilier with a very old and dented shako, asked the general what Captain Feilding's air had been: did he appear dejected? Did he appear as if he were acting under the coercion of the ex-Emperor?

The general said that that was a matter in which he could not judge. And when he was asked if he thought George's motive was to persuade him, General Gorsin, to join the ranks of Napoleon's force, he answered:

"*Monsieur le Colonel, je préfère ne pas attribuer . . .*" He preferred not to attribute motives when he could report words with exactitude. The Captain had upbraided



him with excitement for closing his gates to the ex-Emperor's detail, for the arrest of that detail and for wearing the white cockade of the reigning house. The honourable Court must judge of the motives that lay behind those words. He also added that George had spoken no word that could be construed as expressing disloyalty or a desire for disaster to his own country. He had undoubtedly uttered treason to King Louis XVIII.

"So that here again," a major whose name George did not know exclaimed sourly—he was a poor-looking blond man of forty or so—"here again we are doing the dirty work of others!"

George heard himself suddenly exclaim with passion:

"I ask the indulgence of the honourable Court. I have a right to the indulgence of the honourable Court and to its advice. I wish to protest now that it was against my wishes that my counsel pleaded coercion by the Emperor or any of his staff. I should esteem myself the most miserable of curs if any coercion could make me pursue any course that my reason or enthusiasm did not suggest. I claim again the honourable Court's indulgence as a man whose trials have been very considerable and who is called now with no preparation or forethought to defend himself."

The Highland captain said: "Why, Captain Feilding, if you wish to consider your course we can adjourn." The presiding colonel: "You may be sure that we will allow you, in the circumstances, all the latitude that is possible to us—and the latitude allowed to a prisoner is very considerable."

George said: "Sir, I am fairly well acquainted with the



procedure of court martial and I think I can conduct my case within those limits. What I beg of the honourable Court is its indulgence in case I betray such emotion as may seem disrespect to the honourable Court." He asked the honourable Court to consider that he had been confined for five months without access to the outside world, the fellow-officers allotted to guard him being forbidden to converse with him, with no right to communicate with his friends or to receive their communications, his counsel even forbidden access to him on the plea that since, at vastly infrequent intervals, Mr. Assheton Smith had been permitted to see him as Prisoner's Friend, no other defender could replace him.

"This," the presiding colonel said, "is very unfortunate, but not germane to the case. We have no control over the Provost Marshal's or your regiment's regulation for the control of your person, unless indeed you are putting in a plea of mitigation of sentence: but this is not, as you may be aware, the moment for that."

"God forbid that I should put in a plea for mitigation of sentence," George exclaimed hotly. "As I have made my bed so I must lie in it. I am however trying to point out to the honourable Court that I wish to pursue a line of defence different from that taken by the gentleman who has left the Court. And I may add that almost the most exquisite tortures that I have had to suffer came from the necessity to sit silent whilst that person mangled both my case, my reputation and my feelings."

The Court expressed its willingness to allow him to make a speech outlining his new case and to re-examine the witnesses, but he said that he was in no state of mind

to take a long course. He cavilled at none, or very little of the evidence given: he was ready to rest his case on that.

The prosecuting captain, also a Blackwatchman, with a black moustache and the resentful eyes of the Gael—a magnificent fellow with his great, dark kilt, huge knees and silver finery, said eagerly to the president at that:

“If Captain Feilding will assert inability to plead through insanity I will call a doctor, have him examined and at once abandon the case. . . . I suggest earnestly to Captain Feilding that he pursue that course!”

“By God, that I will not,” George called out, “there lies my sword on the table before you. I will abide the issue whether the hilt or the point be towards me when the deliberation of the honourable Court is finished!”

Yet his nervous agitation was so great that immediately afterwards he apologized almost pitifully to the Court for having introduced the sacred name. He desperately desired his acquittal. It would appear that the Court did too, for a letter being brought in to the President and passed to the other officers, after a consultation the President said—he had a husky, rather sweet old voice and his blue eyes an aspect of being faded:

“Sergeant Coffin, your late defender sends me notice that he will report to the Lord Chancellor and the Judge Advocate General on irregularities in our procedure. If you wish it we will adjourn until that issue is settled. It would of course be tantamount to a verdict of acquittal if either of those authorities found that we had been remiss in our duties.”

George said—and his voice spoke for him almost without following his thoughts:

"Sir, I desire your judgment on my honour for my own instruction; and I demand your acquittal if I may have it, for the sake of one—of those—who are dearer to me than life. But if the indictment were fuller of flaws than it contains words or if your procedure were more injurious than that of Judge Jeffreys after Sedgemoor, upon my life I would take advantage neither of the one nor the other to procure my acquittal. So I propose to do no more than, after Captain Middleton has made his speech in prosecution, to make my own speech on the evidence and leave it at that."

He imagined that by that means he would have at least a half hour's rest whilst the Highlander spoke and then—if he were condemned to be shot—Hélène at least would be allowed access to him in his cell, or if he were acquitted, within an hour he would be in her arms. His mind was completely occupied by her; his eyes seemed to see none other. He was scarcely conscious of the room in which he stood, but for the fact that he had the old officers and the young fair boy who was there for instruction before him and at his back a crowd, whose faces he had looked at but once to see if she might be among them. He knew that he was in a room of a *mairie* close to the gates of the cavalry barracks where he had been confined, that there were round-topped windows on each side of its length and that behind the back of the court had been a huge portrait of Louis XVIII till the judge had ordered it to be taken away and the royal arms of England on a flag suspended in its place. So there the leopards marched and the lion ramped—the only colour in the room, save for the uniforms of the officers and the blue coat of Mr.

Assheton Smith, who had been accorded the politeness of a chair to the right of the court's table. Either because he disdained the Court's procedure or was certain that fear of the Duke of Wellington's displeasure would assure a conviction—or else because he was satisfied with the turn things had taken—Mr. Smith had addressed no word to any soul all that afternoon, but sat, leaning back, his long white strapped trousers very prominent, taking snuff from time to time with a high air from a box of blue enamel. His hat, which stood on the floor beside his chair, was much more conical than was then usual and its ribbon was decorated with a great steel buckle—a mode that he was then trying to introduce.

The young Highlander however gave no promise of time for recovery to George Feilding. He said that he proposed to make no speech—or next to none—either then or in reply to Captain Feilding unless he raised new points not yet traversed. The evidence was before the honourable Court: he had laid before them all that he could discover whether unfavourable or favourable to the cause of the accused officer. With regard to the accusation of desertion, that charge could hardly lie in face of the evidence repeatedly elicited by Captain Campbell of the 42d. That pointed to the fact that Captain Feilding had habitually worn and appeared always whether in public or in private in the uniform of his regiment, and by the King's Regulations and the laws of war the wearing of uniform even though in actual absence from his unit was held, if there were no other evidence of intention to be permanently absent, to count as evidence of non-intention to desert on the part of those wearing the uni-

form of His Majesty's Forces. Moreover it was a matter of common knowledge that all usual roads between this country and Great Britain had been stopped by the month of May and George Feilding had been granted a year's leave of absence from the month of May of the year before to the same month last past. In addition there was strong evidence that Captain Feilding had been detained by his parole to the late usurper of the throne of France and the fact that it was a usurper that exacted that parole did not absolve a man of honour from its observation, nor did it render it incumbent on an officer to refuse his parole and insist on incarceration.

As to the charge of comforting the King's enemies Captain Middleton proposed to say nothing. The evidence was before the honourable court who had perspicacity sufficient to judge it at least as well as himself. Evidence that Captain Feilding had in Paris itself done, said or attempted anything against his king or his dominions after Great Britain had formally declared war was extremely small and would, he imagined, disappear altogether if . . .

George exclaimed: "If you refer to the evidence of that infamous informer, the Viscount Clermont-St. Cyr-Brion . . ."

"Captain Feilding may calm himself," the Highlander remarked to the President.

"In common humanity," George said, "I should at least be allowed to send a messenger to the house of a witness I have not been allowed to approach and whom my friends have been unable to discover. Madame de Frèjus knows my every thought and the most intimate secrets of my heart . . ."



"Why, you may spare yourself the trouble," the Highlander exclaimed. "I hold here the evidence, taken on commission, of a witness who swears that you . . ." He coughed, stuttered and apologized to the honourable Court for addressing the accused officer instead of themselves.

Leaning forward in his chair, for his legs he could not trust, George Feilding cried out:

"In the name of God, Middleton, is it H  l  ne de Fr  jus!"

The President raised his head but did not speak: the prosecutor nodded his head over his paper. The evidence, he read, taken on commission at—but he was not at liberty to name the place—of Madame H  l  ne Sophie Henrietta Georgina, Baronne de Fr  jus . . .

George cried out: "In the name of God, Middleton, give me the address. If you value my life, if you value my reason—as an old friend . . ."

The President said: "Captain Feilding, you must be aware that this is not the moment. If the evidence taken on commission is insufficient in the eyes of the Court to substantiate any testimony that you wish to give yourself . . ."

George stood up and holding waveringly to the back of his chair cried:

"Sir, it is the address—it is the address that I desire. . . . Am I not a sufficiently broken man?"

He was aware of a buzz of voices from behind him; the tall Highlander suddenly made a most extraordinary grimace and dropped his hands with a gesture of despair. The old, poor major with the unknown name beckoned



the Highlander to him and whispered into his large ear, then to the President; the President spoke to Mr. Assheton Smith, who shrugged his shoulders and eventually nodded. The President spoke to the Highlander. George was aware that he swayed on his feet like a pendulum that had been planted in the earth. Then the Highlander was bending over him.

"Man! Man!" he heard through a sort of darkness such as might be made by a cloud of bees, "you may be in the lady's arms in half an hour if ye will but let me finish my readings." Extraordinary pieces of information existed in that haze. Frèjus was in the Conciergerie; the evidence of Hélène had been taken in the same place for convenience because the evidence of the Baron too was needed to prove that Clermont-St. Cyr-Brion had never been in the Baron's house so that the Viscount could never there have heard—as he had sworn two days before—George Feilding speaking treason against his country to Hélène. That fact, allowing for the detestation that the Court felt for all the former *émigrés*, would have been sufficient to save George's neck.

But George was never able to differentiate in his own mind what the Highlander told him from what he gave in evidence. The world suddenly built itself up anew around him, but how it came to him he did not know. Frèjus was in prison: Marshal Ney was in prison; Marshal Brune had been assassinated by a mob; Labedoyère was in prison; Count Bertrand and Drouet proscribed; Sir Robert Wilson had aided the escape of one of the Marshals and showed him at the Westminster Election with great applause: Middleton could not remember

that Marshal's name—or Feilding could not remember.

The haze deepened over George. His ears buzzed, his eyes were at times obscured by yellow flames; he hardly knew what he was doing: certainly when a week later he was in Madame Aglaë's salon he could remember nothing—or so little. There had been talking. Someone he did not know held a glass to his teeth. Brandy burned him inside. He was on his feet—talking!

Oddly enough it was Marshal Ney's estate between Frèjus and Cannes that was in his mind. Because, no doubt, when he had seen it beside the Emperor—the long white house, the avenue, the women and children, the old man with crutches, the blossoms, the tranquillity and the profusion—he had been thinking not only of the greatness of the work Napoleon claimed to have done for France but also of the bliss that it would be to live there with his Hélène. He had imagined her in the white *mas*, in a yellow gingham dress, very high in the waist, with cross-strapped sandals and a great palmetto hat, like a frail, tied under the chin with pink ribbons—in the *mas*, looking out of the window at the avenue that the breeze tossed and the Mediterranean. Her brown eyes light, smiling; her arms a little stretched towards him. The *mas* had so much impressed him, he had so often thought of her there, that she seemed now to come towards him, her arms still a little outstretched and still faintly smiling. In half an hour he was to be in those arms: the Highlander, his old friend Middleton who had held to his stirrup in some charge in some Spanish valley . . . Fuentes . . . Ciudad . . . he could not remember the name; the Highlander, then, had said that

in half an hour he would be within those arms if he did not interrupt him, Middleton . . . not a Highland name that —Lowland. Middleton's mother had been a Macgregor though!

He was speaking. He was speaking all the while about the agriculture of Napoleon: about the coercion it exercised over the minds of the young. He said something like: "The destruction of his wars was terrible to think of, but the great body of his people at home were happy and content, in peace and plenty," or: "He did more to assist the agriculture of France and to promote a home-trade an hundred times more important than France had ever had, in five years, though so deeply engaged in war, than the Bourbons had done in five centuries," or: "the people were relieved from the monstrous impositions and horrible oppressions of the ancient nobility and Papist clergy!"

Someone said: "Oh, well, but we have our own Farmer George and liberty."

Someone else said: "You must not say 'the Emperor' here; you must say 'Bonaparte' or the 'late Emperor' "—but kindly enough!

It was a confused affair: he had a sense that he had been listened to kindly and tolerantly. He had called out then or sometime:

"They have assassinated him then! At last they have assassinated him as they tried to in the island!" He did not catch any retort, but he was aware that, under that lash, he had seemed to start forward, like a hunter, into a new flight of eloquence.

It had been a muddled affair; even as he furiously

paced Madame Ney's carpet ten days later fragments of what he had then said stuck about in his mind like shreds and rags of an old poster rotting on a wall. Even above the druggets, the mirrors, the busts and the windows of that torture chamber, images of that moment in the trial superimposed themselves in his mind! He paced and paced, awaiting the return of the maid or the coming of Madame Aglaë, but he heard his voice say:

"Coercion! I am not ashamed of the coercion that the Emperor imposed upon me—the coercion of his greatness in the achievements of peace rather than in the feats of war! Who being young and standing before him could but feel a generous enthusiasm? What other coercion would Napoleon use upon a prisoner? But who is there—who is there in this honourable Court that does not now feel that generosity towards him whose fame has spread to the farthest jungles and savannahs of the New World!" He had begun to talk of Louisiana and North Carolina. . . .

He knew that he had meant to talk about Elizabeth Coleman as a sort of specimen of how the young were inspired by Napoleon. The Court had heard her: nay he had meant to say that his passages as to home-trade and the oppressions of the Papist clergy had been citations from her talk in Lyons. The young woman had much impressed Hélène with her eloquence and precocity—Hélène herself had been less eloquent; even in that blaze of triumph when in their thousands adherents were flocking to the eagles she had been anxious—afraid of the finances. . . . But she had always been afraid of finances. Even when, later, the Duke de Gaeta reported

how the treasury bulged, or when the Emperor would come back from a parade with hundreds of thousands of francs that had been thrown into his carriage by enthusiasts!

She had even, later, been afraid for the life of her husband at times, remembering the part that he had played in those same financings!

But he had meant to tell the honourable Court that there was a specimen of how the glory of Napoleon inspired three young people in a Lyons hotel—Hélène, the young woman from North Carolina, and himself. How then, though he swore that he was as interested for the honour and prosperity of his country as any man there, how could he escape thinking that his country would respect the motives of the great Adventurer and leave him in peace to pursue his beneficent destiny? . . . Something like that!

But it was the brandy they had forced into his mouth that had inspired that collocation of thoughts; and brandy, though it inspire you to eloquence, will yet make you leave singular lacunæ in your reasonings. It will also make you courageous enough to hazard talking about the young women of your acquaintance as instances of your frame of mind. So he never knew whether he had pursued his train of reasoning or not.

For at some moment he began to be aware of a great buzz of voices that was going on behind his back—and then that he had seen the members of the honourable Court filing out behind the table, some seconds before, the Presiding Colonel at their head, going behind a screen. Someone then told him that the Court had retired to de-

liberate on its verdict and he himself was taken behind another screen into a gaunt, long corridor where for a time, on the arm of Mr. Assheton Smith, with a captain of his regiment behind him and scarlet sentries at each of the three issues, he had paced unsteadily up and down.

That was the last that he remembered until he found himself in Mr. Smith's mansion in the rue St. Honoré, next the hotel Monchelu and the Elysée that was guarded by Russian sentries.



## CHAPTER TWO

THE Colonel-Count dei Gatti di Vivario, once of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment that was till lately stationed at Tarascon on the Rhone but was this year disbanded—Felice Gatti, then, sat in a deep *bergère*, in a high, grey-panelled and mournful room, a lady in black sewing on each side of him. His varnished and oiled right wooden leg stuck out before him; his black hair was vivid with silver streaks: his empty left-arm sleeve was pinned to the breast of his old blue tunic where pale stitching marks were evidence that the ribbons of orders had been removed. His title and most of his orders except his battle decorations having been conferred on him by the Emperor at Elba or since, were not recognized by the authorities in power, so that when they had occasion to address him officially they used the appellation ex-Colonel Inspector of Fencing-Masters-of-Cavalry Felice Gatti, a style that pleased his sardonic mood. For he said that it was humorous indeed to make one who had served France for thirty years on the field into a one-legged, one-armed, one-eyed athlete as if they who ruled the state had wished to stamp him with their own image! The pallor of his face was enhanced by the black silk patch that covered his left eye-hole; the crook of his vine-stock walking stick was already much polished by the attrition of his right palm. His features had expressions by turns resigned, sardonic,

jocular or resentful. His black moustache, from his constantly twisting it with one hand, stuck out aggressively on the right of his lips and drooped on the left.

"Yes," he said—it was the tenth of November—"they were monstrously civil to me. If I had been Ajax himself they could not have been more civil. But fine words do not provide the capital for founding cafés; though I will say this: when he heard that I was desirous of founding a café for the dispensing of fine wines and liquors of my island in the shop in the front wall of Madame Aglaë's courtyard, General Villatte declared that he would order his servants to patronize my establishment once it was started, since he lives next door but one from here; and General Chaparède applauded the idea. . . . Masséna asked to be remembered by you, Madame Aglaë. . . . He is very aged and rickety, that poor Masséna. Who would have thought he was once as gallant a figure as myself?"

"It is an outrage," Madame Ney said, "that you who performed the bravest deed on that atrocious field. . . ."

"Why, there were many bravest deeds performed there," he answered; "there was Léocade who rode alone straight into their infantry; whereas I, I had only an idea and carried it out. . . . But I ask myself whether I would have done it if I had known the world into which were coming I and the men they are kind enough to say I saved—if I had known what that world would be!"

Hélène sighed deeply on the other side of him from Madame Ney. Both these women were habited in black, had set faces and sewed unceasingly at black-grey garments. The workers of the Faubourg St. Antoine were near starving-point, all public works having been stopped on

the access of the present king and all trades and handicrafts being nearly at a standstill because of distractions in public opinion.

"Who," she said, "of us would have survived Elba could we have known!"

"Madame Hélène," Gatti answered, "you are a young and beautiful woman with all your life before you. . . . But for me, it is a good thing that the learned Warenovius, Encyclopædist and Philosopher, exiled himself to Corte in my youth and took me for his errand boy and amanuensis. He was not only a philosopher but philosophic. If I, desiring to spare his purse, bought for him in the market a chicken that when stewed proved insupportably tough or *finocchio* that refused to be stewed at all he would gnaw a crust of bread and rejoice that his dog profited. But without that example in my youth, and the taking of his lucubrations from dictation since his hands were too gouty to write, I do not know how I could today support the gloom of my existence. . . ."

"You have friends, you have admirers, you are regarded as a hero . . ." Madame said; "where would you find better friends than Hélène and me?"

"Madame Aglaë," he answered grimly, "it is my misfortune that I have friends, for all my friends are unfortunate and their misfortunes are my own. For myself I could live tolerably but how can I live tolerably or at all when your husband is in prison, Madame Hélène's husband in prison, the husband of my life-long friend Madame Trecocci paralysed by a shot near the spine, so that he and she starve and I can do nothing to aid them. And so with hundreds, all my friends. . . . For myself

I am well enough. If one goes in amongst guns that an enemy has already seized, one must expect to lose an eye, an arm, a leg or so. They have at least left me my moustachios; and if one's party in a war loses its battle one must expect to be impoverished, to lose one's pension, to be deprived of one's titles—and they have hitherto left me at least my head. With a head and moustachios one may very tolerably keep a café in which to dispense Malvoisie, Talana and *eau de vie de Corse*. . . . But my friends . . . my friends . . . how shall they drag out their years?"

"They shall at least release the Marshal, now . . . in a day or two," Madame said. "They can never keep him after the Court has declared its incompetence to try him. And the Baron de Frèjus is certainly saved after the testimony of the Duc de Gaeta. For myself, therefore, the load of your anxiety which I recognize and love may disappear, and for Hélène it may be very much lightened."

He pushed himself deeper into his deep broad chair and, twirling the right half of his moustache, looked gloomily ruminating before him.

"Surely," Madame Ney said, "they cannot in decency or even constitutionally detain Michael longer than for a few formalities!"

He said: "Yes, yes! a few formalities!" with a feverish eagerness. "I am astonished that he is not here now!"

The maid with her great Alsatian ribbons came reluctantly into the room and stood before Madame Aglaë. She said that the English young gentleman in the salon desired earnestly to speak with Madame Ney; she begged to say

that it seemed to be desirable, if the Prinzessin thought fit, to see the English young gentleman. He appeared distracted and she herself, Elsa, the maid, did not know how to deal with him. Hélène suddenly covered her face with her hands and between her fingers exclaimed:

"Go! Go! . . . Dearest Aglaë . . . Dearest, dearest Aglaë. . . . Be gentle! Be kind!" Nevertheless, when the tall figure of her friend was at the open door she exclaimed: "But remorseless! . . . No hope . . . give no hope! . . ."

She was a little concealed from the Colonel by the wing of his chair, so, though tears were wet on the face that she hid from him, she said:

"Good Colonel Felice . . . dear good Colonel Felice . . . I ask you . . . I ask you earnestly. . . . You have never told me what you did—what marvellous valourous feat you did . . . in the fatal battle. . . . You will explain to me how an idea . . . you said an idea . . ." She stopped and leaned back panting in her chair, her eyes closed. "Aglaë knows," she said. "Oh tell me. . . . Talk, talk! I beseech you! I dare not sit and think!"

He continued to look straight before him, his face convulsing itself a great deal.

"You could find a greater, a better distraction," he said, "than an old tale that is mostly nonsense and common report. . . . It was an idea . . . an idea. . . . You know we had lost the guns. . . . We lost the battle when we lost the guns and the English square was behind them. . . . Or it may not have been a square, though they said it was. For myself I saw only the one accursed side of it. But they are inaccurate in battle. . . . You have



never been in battle. There is a great deal of noise; cannon fire; the whistle of bullets; the explosion of bombs, obuses—one should perhaps say *obi*—grenades. The subtle neigh of your horse relatively near your ear. A singular, exciting sound. He says to you: 'There may be mares there that afterwards shall belong to me. There may be stallions. Master and God, you will see to it that it is a good combat!' . . . And shouts! Demoniac shouts! And a sense of haste. . . . Ah, you might lose your head . . . at times you do. . . ."

They had charged five—seven times. He did not know. Ney's cavalry. Always they got through the first line of the English, kneeling with bayonets or firing. . . . Through them they would go; but the second line they never penetrated. The lost French guns stood between the first and second lines. They pointed mostly at the English naturally. But by the third or fourth charge three or four of those guns were turned round.

"They fired at us retreating, the devils!" he said, "Ah, there were empty saddles! They fired I think canister!"

It might have been at the sixth charge—at any rate it was just after the Marshal had taken Kellermann's cavalry from the reserve—and that was said to have lost the battle! Perhaps it did. . . . At any rate when they were mixed in with Kellermann's troopers and retreating—running away!—in a terribly solid body, the thought had come to him that if the British fired their cannon into that mass the slaughter would be unparalleled. . . . Ney himself had had four horses out of the seven he lost killed under him by that method. He, Gatti, had seen Ney down twice; watching him once whilst his own horse went down



by the same method. So he had had the idea as they rode away from the sixth attack—or the fifth or fourth, whichever it was—that those guns must be stopped. That was all. He had been raving and shouting to his men to come back. It had been then that Léocade, at the same task, had ridden alone straight upon the British bayonets. But he, Gatti, had not been so foolhardy as that. You can be singularly calm in your *for intérieur* though outwardly raving at your men. And why should he, Gatti, not be calm. Hitherto he had never been so much as scratched in say twenty engagements. He had as it were strolled about in hailstorms of bullets and had even meditated very successfully. They made up to him in generous measure immediately afterwards for not yet having wounded him, but at the moment all he had had to do had been to reflect that those guns were probably very scantily manned. They had no artillery there: at any rate he had seen none. The fire of the second British line had slackened since the body of the French cavalry was already through the first, he himself and the guns being between the two lines, he with his back naturally to the guns and the British. So he had wheeled his horse quite deliberately and had seen sure enough as he galloped a little towards the flank that that second line had not even re-loaded but were waiting for the refreshments that were being brought to them. Ah, those fortunate, fat and pampered British! They were said by the greatest military authority to be matchless in a pitched battle but relatively useless in skirmishes and that was true enough: that will surely be the case if you feed up your troops so that to run at all—even to run away—must be a distasteful exertion.

So there they were, a disordered scarlet huddle; some were even taking off their bearskins, their muskets, bayonets—fixed, between their knees. Red-faced men!

And sure enough two or three officers and a few men were running out towards the French guns; some hauling the guns round; others clumsy with tompions and sponges; others opening the ammunition boxes.

Well, he had got—galloping along the line between line and guns—one young officer as he ran towards a gun—nearly severing his head from his neck. He had got another out of two that were training and about to fire the next gun; another out of three at the next. There were then three unmanned guns and it might be twenty yards to the next, with such a heap of dead and horses on the ground that he could not get his horse over them but almost brushed the British lines to get round. It annoys a horse, he said, to have too frequently to leap masses of dead, especially of their own species.

It had been dead silent along the British lines till then, in the sunlight, and he had been able to hear the jingle of his own accoutrements—a friendly sound that he should never hear again! They are slow thinkers, the British, and naturally it is difficult for a sharpshooter to hit a galloping horseman before he has his wits about him or his Brown Bess loaded, and they could not fire volleys for fear of hitting their own men at the guns. So he had galloped across before their faces, wondering good-humouredly enough when they would begin to fire and a little scornful of their too well-fed slowness.

But before he got to the next gun there were poppings from a section of the line and before he was at the gun

his bridle arm was useless at his side. He bagged nevertheless the officer at that one; but when the bullet took out his left eye he could not see very well with the other and the men at the next were ready for him, warned by the firing and shouts. Before that it had been easy, for he had had mostly only to sabre officers who were bending over the sights of the gun. Madame Hélène was to understand that these were no artillerists but merely infantry and one or two cavalry officers and men who loaded and fired in a rule-of-thumb manner. The last one, at least, had one of those squat brass helmets with plumes on the right hand side at the rear that the cavalry—or it may have been the militia—wore in battle. But they had stopped him before he killed the next, that officer shooting his horse in the windpipe from in front with a pistol so that the animal had crashed right onto the gun itself, breaking Gatti's leg in several places. He begged Madame Hélène not to think of him wanting in humanity for singling out only officers to attack. He had done it because he reasoned out that the officers most probably would have some slight knowledge of how to fire cannon which the Other Ranks were less likely to possess. He could not expect to kill or maim more than one at each piece, but he had thought that if he killed the officer the brain of the gun would be gone.

He was continuing quietly: "That apparently proved to be the case, for I heard lately . . ." when Hélène screamed:

"Oh, why did you not kill George Feilding! Why did you not kill George!"

Scream after scream of laughter came from her, con-

tinuing, shaking, seeming to echo from the ceiling and walls of the gloomy, high room.

With enormous difficulty he pushed his high, heavy chair round so that he could see her and yet sit; he could not trust his unaccustomed feet upon the slippery parquet of the flooring. It would be a pretty sight if he crawled on his hands and knees whilst she screamed with laughter. But she would stop soon; she had great strength of mind and would stop soon. In the event she stopped and looked at him dazedly. He said:

"I do not understand very well. If the young man has injured you . . . has betrayed . . . what do I know? Though I like him very well I will shoot him. He could not refuse to meet a soldier with my record and, strapped to a post, I could shoot him. There is nothing against being strapped to a post. I have seen it done!"

She said: "Listen! You could do me a service." She leaned forward on her chair and touched his knee. "It is insupportable that he should be in this house and in misery. But what is to be done? What is to be done?"

He said: "I don't know. I don't know. I am an old man, you a young girl, but it is you that must enlighten me."

She said: "There is nothing to be done. There is nothing but pain. It is irremediable."

"There is nothing that is irremediable," he said.

"This is!" she answered. "It is the one case in the world that is irremediable."

"Madame Hélène," he said gravely, "if you so love this

young man . . . For either you love him and another has him or has taken him from you . . . or you have been false to him. . . . And irremediable! That is no word. Say your father had killed his . . . or his brother your brother. . . . But you have no brother. . . ."

She had been looking away, unlistening; now she looked at him, her eyes dilated, brushing back the hair that had fallen on her brow.

"No brother?" she asked. "No, I have no brother!" She said:

"This is aside from the mark. . . . You have seen him often? How often? Every day? For long periods? Then talk to me of him. How did you come to him? In what health did he—no, does he—appear? Talk of him! . . . How is he even dressed; how does he pass his days?"

He said: "I have seen him every day at Madame Krudener's. . . ."

She said sharply: "What? Who is that? What woman? Has he formed an attachment? Mind what you are saying!"

He said: "No; it is the milor that appears to be attached to Madame Krudener. Why, heaven knows! In effect she is the Tsar Alexander's mistress. Or seer. Or prophetess. No one knows. Perhaps it is pride that attaches the milor to the lady. He might pride himself on detaching the seer or prophetess or mistress of the Tsar Alexander from the Tsar. On the other hand he is such as Lucifer for pride that he regards the Tsar as the dirt under his feet. So he would hardly take pride in taking the Tsar's leavings. It is all a riddle."

She said: "It is not the Tsar nor the milor nor the



mistress of one or the other that is the thing I wish to hear about."

"It is difficult," he answered, "to talk of the young man without talking of the others. It is a daily program. Every afternoon at thirty-five minutes past two the young man appears in the salon of Madame de Krudener, dressed now in dark purple, now in bottle green, now in *bleu de roi*. Very modish. And there he will stay till six thirty, talking very little, except that from time to time he will contrive to ask of Madame de Staël, of Madame Rummel, of Madame Récamier, of M. Constant or whom you will, if they can give him your address. For you might, he thought, be at Coppet with Madame de Staël or at St. Cloud with Madame Récamier. . . . Or no, it is Bourrienne that is at St. Cloud and was complaining of the Prussians of Marshal Blücher. I have forgotten where Madame Récamier was."

"This is like being mad," Hélène said. "Who are all these people? . . . I know who they are. . . . But what are they doing? . . . And he is below in another room and you will not tell me how he appears!"

He answered patiently:

"During his incarceration he appeared pallid and, at the conclusion, weak. We had to carry him from the Court. But he is young and strong . . . though he seems older now, as is natural that he should! He was dressed today in dark purple with an odd, buckled hat and a clouded cane."

"Oh, I do not ask how he is dressed," she said, "though it would be more fitting if he dressed like me in black. Ask you to tell me why he goes to this Madame; how he came there in the first place."



"Why," Gatti answered, "the milor will not suffer him to dress in black since it might imply repentance on his part. His father has disinherited him. . . ." She gave a cry of pain. "That is to say," he continued hastily, "he has agreed with his father to his own disinheritance except as to lands—in the West Indies, I think. But there have been comings and goings of lawyers. . . . In short, the young man is liked by many but shunned by some. I have seen an English general avoid his hand when he held it out."

"He should be in my arms: in my arms! . . . Oh my God, what do I say!" she sobbed.

"He should be in your arms," Gatti said gravely. "He went to Madame de Krudener's salon for no other purpose but to have your direction. . . . Do you suppose he went to pray with the Tsar or to hear the prophesies of Madame Kummel or Rummer, for I forget the name? . . . And he had your address this afternoon from—I did not hear the lady's name either—and ran straightway from the room. There were but few remaining there and when they went the milor bade me follow him, and since I knew he would come to this house I myself came. But I pray he may not have committed some amorous follies with that woman, for today the Tsar was to have handed him the ukase—if it is a ukase—for the pardon. . . ."

Hélène was shivering, drawing in her breath in little jets.

"In heaven's name," she brought out, "what has George to have from the Tsar? And you spoke of amorous follies. . . ."

"I spoke of the milor," Gatti said. "I beg you to be patient with me."

"Oh, poor Felice!" she said, "I will be patient. Think only that for five months I too have been like a prisoner in this house: that I know nothing; see nobody; that I am distracted with griefs and anxieties; that my life is ended; that there remains only for me the service of God!"

"Death of my life," the Corsican exclaimed, "you will not go into a convent!"

"The Americas are closed to me," she said; "I would have gone to them to see if the New World will not restore what the Old has broken! But they are closed as by an angel with a flaming sword."

"*Ma . . . ma . . .*" Gatti stuttered, "there is always Corsica. You shall go with me to Corsica—with me as your broken Squire. It is a lovely island with a divine atmosphere."

"Oh but tell me. . . . That woman who told him where I was. Who was she? I have lived so secludedly."

"I think it was the sister of the Comte Decazes," Gatti answered; "I cannot tell, but I think it was because in her connexion someone said that the Comte—and I think they said 'her brother'—the First Minister of Louis, was a humane man and well-disposed to him for whom all in this house pray all day. She would have it of her brother and her brother from his spies."

"No," Hélène said, "Sophie was here to tell Aglaë that she daily importuned her brother for the pardon of our dear Marshal. No doubt she would not think it amiss, though I swore her to secrecy, to tell my address to a fine

young man. She would think my secrecy confined only to the spies of the Minister of Police who is less humane than the Comte her brother."

"For myself," Gatti grumbled, "I distrust as much the humanity of the Comte Decazes, First Minister, as I should have distrusted it had I had to suffer under him when he was assistant to Fouché in the police. . . . For me all ministers, statesmen, Tsars, Emperors and Kings and priests are tarred with the same brush."

She said: "It was then to discover where I was that he went to the house of this Madame de . . . I cannot say her name. But how did he obtain access to that salon? She is I suppose no Englishwoman."

"She is I think Russian," Gatti said. "But if you will not let me talk how can I convey news to you. He came to Madame de Krudener in this way: You must know that every afternoon since I could walk, which is now a month, I have waited on the milor at half past two and we have sallied out. Latterly—for the last six days or so—the young Feilding has gone with us." It had been, at the beginning, a singular introduction for him, Gatti, to all the great of the world.

Assheton Smith had come to see him on October 10th not long after his return from the hospital in Brussels where they had patched him up and given him a wooden leg. That had been about—or exactly—a month ago, for it was then November tenth. Smith had come to find him in the room that he occupied in the house of his friend Madame Trecocci. He and that lady had then had five sous between them. Smith had needed him as evidence for the young George Feilding and had taken him straight before the

Duke of Wellington in a Hotel in the Place de la Concorde where the Duke then had his private office. His headquarters were elsewhere: that one the Duke used for his private affairs: those of his estate, perhaps—or, they said, for his *amourettes*. He had received them in *négligé*—a fawn dressing gown over a Turkish, frogged, wadded jacket. The jacket had a star upon it that the milor said was the Garter or the Bath or something. The milor supposed that the Duke slept with his orders to impress his fly-by-nights. It had been afterwards that he had said that.

The Duke had received them in a small room, very high, lined with books that went up to the ceiling. There was a ladder with a rail up which no doubt you climbed to get at the highest books. Milor said that the Duke never read a book in his life: the room had been in the old days the private library of the Comte de Bourbon.

The Duke sat—it was late evening—behind an immense, gold-inlaid writing table with an immense book of accounts open before him. He had also an inkwell made of a horse's hoof, and on each side of him was the illumination of six candles in branch candlesticks. Behind his back on the wall above the fireplace was a black plaque of porcelain showing a profile of Napoleon the Great. That, the milor said, was in the worst of taste: when the Duke warmed his buttocks before the fire he turned them towards his greater rival, desiring to show that he was now the greatest power in the world. The milor however had approved of the inkwell-hoof: he said that it had belonged to—Gatti could not remember the name—the Duke's last charger, a famous Arab. . . . But

even a Wellesley could have an affection for a favourite horse! The Duke's face was so highly polished that the candle-light shone on the highlights of his brows. He extended two fingers towards the milor, Assheton Smith waving his right hand to one side. The Duke had not risen; the milor sat down unbidden. The Duke had looked at Gatti like . . . Gatti threw his head back in order to glance down his nose and half closed his one eyelid, to assume an air of intense *hauteur*. Assheton Smith, leaned elegantly forward on his cane, his satin-lined coat-skirts on the ground. He said:

"Duke . . . this is the Colonel-Count . . . I beg your pardon, your friends have degraded him. You see how, with obedience, his tunic shows the places where his ribbons have been removed. Even tunics obey your friends! But this is Mr. Felice Gatti!"

The Duke minutely raised his lids and exclaimed:

"Ha! The man of the guns!" and, to Gatti: "You gave us inconvenience!"

Gatti had tried to come to the "attention"—he was before the victor of Mont St. Jean!—But it is difficult to come smartly to attention when you support yourself by a wooden leg and a crutch.

"Your friends . . ." the milor began.

"Your country's allies!" the Duke said dryly.

"It is distasteful to think of them as my country's allies," Mr. Smith said, "so I prefer to use the other locution. They then have showed an unusual generosity to Mr. Gatti. They have left him the clothes on his back and legs and five sous that they omitted to find in his trousers' pocket! A sou a-piece for each ten of the battles



in which Mr. Gatti fought for his and their country."

"This then," the Duke said, "is your witness for your young friend—the deserter."

Mr. Smith said: "For the sake of humanity, Duke, it would seem that Count Gatti—I beg pardon, I meant no treason—Mr. Gatti, should be invited to seat himself."

Of that the Duke took no notice: he continued to look at the Corsican and asked if he spoke English, adding that he should because he was probably born an English subject. Gatti had answered that he had learnt English whilst on parole at Bideford; before his exchange at the Treaty of Amiens he had been there and on Dartmoor. The Duke said:

"You fought a duel with an English officer called Feilding? In Elba? At the end of February? He was put upon parole? You were both put upon parole? Well, what does that prove? You were neither brought to trial."

Gatti said: "I was employed upon a duty, Monsieur le Maréchal."

Wellington said: "Say 'your Grace': I am not the Prince of the Moskwa. You cannot throw dust in my eyes. You were neither put upon trial because the thing was a plot."

Gatti said: "It is true, I am more used to speaking to Marshal Ney. But he is more polite." He was beginning to foam with rage—with virtuous rage! And that was curious, because, in effect, the duel and its sequences had been a plot—though George Feilding had had no part in it.

The Duke exclaimed: "Enough said. You old soldiers of the Corsican exceed yourselves. Daily you grow more brawling!"

"Why," the milor drawled, "Your Grace was to be re-



quested to open your Grace's ears—less as your Grace the Duke than as Field Marshal and soldier—to open then the ears of your Grace to the plea of this suppliant wretch—surely your Grace must have heard of this brawling pauper's exploit with which all the world rings. Why, your Grace has heard of it. You spoke of it just now."

"Mr. Smith," the Duke had said, "I have got up from a bed of sickness at the dictates of humanity and at your pressing instance. . . . Who indeed would not at the instance of Mr. Smith?"

"Why," Mr. Smith said, "I have sixteen pocket boroughs and command absolutely the votes of from fourteen to twenty more. If they should at my direction vote against the Government of which I have been the supporter, they would count sixty upon a division and your Grace being now more politician than commander of armed forces . . ."

"I confess, I cannot take you," the Duke said; "I wish to, but I cannot if you will not be plainer."

Mr. Assheton Smith said:

"Your Grace . . . Your Grace's most excellent Grace, is I believe the correct fashion of address to a duke."

"Mr. Smith," the Duke said—he was colouring and fidgeting with his inkstand—"enough of this, an you will. A soldier coming to beg clemency of the chief of his conqueror's forces should be acquainted with the correct style in which to address that man. It is a detail of discipline: you have heard that I am a disciplinarian."

"It is I then, Duke," Mr. Smith said, "that am to blame. I am no soldier but I think I know enough of soldiers to

have the illusion that they would prefer to the title of 'Your Grace,' share it though you do with Archbishops, which gives it a soft sound—I had thought that every soldier in the world, aye and every layman, would prefer to that title, that other one of Marshal—as who should say 'Marshal of France,' when the words are in the mouth of a follower and intimate, humble friend of the Bravest of the Brave! In my ear, at least, the sound has a greater resonance—as of the *vox clara in altis*. . . . More, then, of the trumpet sound! So, in short, it was I that bade this poor fellow address you as 'Marshal.' . . ."

It was plain, Gatti said, in recounting this scene, that the milor's aim was to provoke the Duke of Wellington to some imprudent explosion that he could report in all the salons of Paris, as it was the Duke's aim to be circumspect. On the face of it, as he said, to Hélène, what should this civilian, who had not even any office, have about him to make circumspection in handling him seem desirous to the conqueror of the conqueror of the world? But you had to consider the singular nature of the British people of whom Mr. Assheton Smith was at that moment the idol—as being Master of the Quorn Hounds, incomparable with the duelling sword, unapproachable for wealth, insolence and the promotion of boxing. If, Gatti said, you had driven daily about Paris with Mr. Smith, as he had been privileged to do, you would have observed the singular phenomenon of the crowds that followed the carriages of the respective great. If Mr. Smith's carriage should meet and pass the carriage of Louis XVIII, far over half the crowd following the King would be detached and follow the

milor; if it were Wellington himself, less to more according to the neighbourhood; the Tsar Alexander less; Marshal Blücher far less. In short the only one who had held his own with Mr. Assheton Smith had been Sir Walter Scott, and he not quite. And his popularity increased the more when it was known that Mr. Smith was devoting the whole of his energies against, at least, the Duke, possibly Marshal Blücher and possibly the King—the whole of his energies to saving from the firing squads that were the final expression of the *émigrés* and Ultras, not only Marshal Ney himself but even humbler prey. And the keenness and insolence of Mr. Smith's tongue was a thing of which the Duke of Wellington himself might well stand in awe—and in the end he had his votes in the House of Commons! His popularity had indeed been increased to fever heat just before this—the third—interview of his with the conqueror of Waterloo, by a fortunate circumstance. As their carriage went one day slowly in the crush of the equipages of the innumerable distinguished and wealthy of all nations, a man had sprung onto the hind-springs of the carriage and, leaning over, had stabbed Mr. Smith in the shoulder with a poniard. The wound had indeed been the merest pin-prick and, with the greatest sang-froid and rapidity, Mr. Smith had seized the wrist of the fellow who was attempting another stroke, having hoisted himself further over the hood. At the subsequent inquiry—before it had been quashed—it had appeared that the fellow had been hired by a committee of the detested Ultras to perform that action. But Mr. Smith had been afforded the occasion to appear in public

with a spotless scarf supporting his arm and had been unable to pass a group of scarlet officers lounging at the cafés on the boulevards without their rushing out, hoisting their shakos high and cheering him to the echo. . . . And it had been as the would-be deliverer of Ney that they cheered him. Mr. Assheton Smith indeed declared that he knew two separate conspiracies amongst younger officers to rescue the Marshal from the Conciergerie and to transport him to a safe spot in England—as had been done by Sir Robert Wilson.

So it had seemed to Gatti that Wellington's ceding of an interview to Mr. Assheton Smith had about it quite as much the air of his pleading to Mr. Smith for his own policy as of permitting Mr. Smith to plead the cause of Ney.

The Duke had, earnestly but without agitation, put it to Mr. Smith that he owed a duty of patriotism to his country and his sovereign. It was essential to the interests of Great Britain that the King of France should be strengthened. He pointed out that, had not he and the British troops long preceded the Russians and Austrians in Paris, France would certainly have been parcelled out between the Emperors, and that would be *finis Britannicæ*.

"For me," Mr. Assheton Smith said, "I would rather my country were ended than disgraced by getting between the sheets with such lousy bedfellows as this King and his crew."

The Duke went on to say that to present such a spectacle of pardoned desertion, treason and perjury as Mar-

shal Ney would be, if ever again he walked the streets of Paris, irretrievably to weaken the cause of the King. In the first place it would encourage all the boasting and rebellious remainders of the ex-Emperor's army who sufficiently swaggered it already in the public streets, and then it must alienate from his Majesty the loyalest and warmest of his supporters.

"You would bolster up a throne by treachery and murder," Mr. Assheton Smith said highly. "There are African potentates whose golden chairs are supported on skulls. . . . But what skulls are these that your Grace—a soldier—would employ for his throne of cobwebs? . . . You are a soldier and you will give the eyeless, socketless heads of whom? . . . Of the bravest of the brave, or the most commanding of commanders, of the most soldierly of soldiers . . . and of a few poor mice like Frèjus the banker and I know not whom!"

"Frèjus the banker is a most dangerous man," the Duke said. "I was as relieved by his condemnation yesterday as if I had won a battle in Spain."

"He does not hold any of your paper?" Mr. Assheton Smith said. "It is not Carleton House that shall mourn for the death of that financier. I on the other hand am handicapped in my pleading, holding a cool million pounds or so of his. So that if I pleaded for his life I should have the appearance of advancing the cause of my own pocket. . . . I should nevertheless suggest that you should respite him—in Louis's interests."

The Duke, relieved to be talking of Frèjus and so to be free of the subject of Ney, affected a limp interest.



"Why," Mr. Smith said, "it is reported that his fortune and all trace of it have disappeared. His wife I know has been deprived of her dowry and charged not only with the expense of his trial to the state but also with the fees of the admirable Sanson, the executioner."

"It is true that his papers and the traces to much of his fortune have disappeared in the hands of a fellow that passed for his footman," the Duke said, "but I do not see what we should gain by his respite."

"Why, you could worry him till he disclosed," Mr. Smith said; "or there are red-hot pincers. . . . They say you have tortured Labedoyère."

The Duke said: "Come, come, Mr. Smith. . . . Obviously we have put pressure on the Baron de Frèjus. He turned considerable sums belonging to the Crown into the coffers of Napoleon."

"Why," Mr. Smith said, "you could promise him his life and when he had revealed his secrets you could guillotine him."

"I think you are not in earnest," the Duke said.

"A cool million is no flea-bite," Mr. Smith said. "You understand that I am talking of pounds sterling, not French livres."

The Duke asked what he would have.

"Why," Mr. Smith said coolly, "only that, if I am able to persuade the Comte Decazes to respite this financier for a month longer, you will not insist on his head for tomorrow's breakfast."

"I have nothing against it," the Duke said. "Carleton House, as you know, demands that he should be made an



example of, but I take it they are in no hurry. . . . That is rather a matter for the French. It is they who clamour for his removal. . . .”

“You could hardly call them French,” Mr. Smith said softly.

“Why, call them what your whimsical taste demands,” the Duke answered. “But it is certain that the Comte Decazes will lie on no bed of roses if he delays throwing Frèjus’s head to the *ci-devant émigrés* and Ultras. They are anxious that their paper should be put into a state where it cannot be presented as is the case when an acceptor is executed for High Treason. And de Frèjus must hold enough of their pre-Restoration paper to line all the drawers in the Tuileries. But I am not sufficiently their friend—think what you will—to prefer their interests to those of Mr. Assheton Smith.”

The Duke at that point presented visible traces of fatigue. Sweat, when he leant forward between the candles, was visible on his temples, but mostly he had abandoned his ramrod attitude and leaned back in his chair.

“With that settled I would not keep you from the warm delights of your Grace’s bed,” Mr. Smith said. “But I do earnestly desire to set before your Grace certain considerations. I beg you to consider that Marshal Ney—with the exception of One,” and he glanced pointedly at the plaque that showed the vengeful visage of Bonaparte, “with the exception of one, the Marshal is the only soldier who in the opinion of the world stands before your Grace. If, without raising a finger in his protection you permit this man to go down before a squad of infantry to Orchus, what shall be the dreadful opinion of Posterity upon your

Grace's motives or of all the nations on the credit of our country? I beseech—I truly beseech—your Grace to let my representation weigh with you. And I am a man who never before deigned to ask a favour from the mightiest that ever sat on a throne. But I am interested for my country, and for good or for bad at this moment your Grace holds the credit of our country in the hollow of his palm as a child might hold a penny."

"Mr. Smith," the Duke said, "you have spoken with a frankness such as is in turn seldom my privilege to hear. I will speak with an equally open revelation of my mind. I have my duty to consider and if Posterity is ass enough to adopt your views, which seem to me to be tinged with the hypochondria of the age—a thing that I regret to see in one who—be my claims to immortality, or those of Marshal Ney or of Bonaparte, who at least was a soldier, what they may—is the greatest master of the Quorn that ever ordered the Hark Forrard—in short if Posterity will malign me Posterity be damned!"

Both of them had sprung to their feet and regarded each other, breathing hotly through their nostrils.

"Sir," the Duke said, "this pother that the Universe makes about that fellow is inexplicable, and you will regret in the end your besottedness. The fellow is a boisterous oaf, the fellow is no general, the fellow is no soldier. Do you suppose that soldiering is a matter of standing on guns or the plinths of statues waving your sword as a drummer before a booth gesticulates with his drumstick!"

Mr. Assheton Smith's face had become set and vicious. "Wellesley, Wellesley!" he exclaimed, "the man you

malign was called the Bravest of the Brave by a greater than you and his very sword has received the accolade of the Universe."

"It was his sword, as you know, betrayed that swaggering and drunken peasant to the prefect's men at Auxerre," Wellington said. "And bravery! What has bravery to do with soldiering? I do not pride myself on my bravery!"

"You do well!" Mr. Smith said. "Ney was a fool not to have served under John Company in India. Against Tippoo Tib was it? At Patiala was it? Or Bandra-core?"

The Duke's high, lean face in turn became rigid and, the star on his breast gleaming as he moved, he shifted his right hand to his left thigh. He had actually, in his youth, passed before a Court of Inquiry concerning a retreat he had ordered in an Indian campaign, and, though he had been acquitted, he had never—as was the case with most of his great contemporaries—had occasion to display conspicuous valour on the battlefield.

"Why," Mr. Smith said, "I am well-known enough to refuse to receive the seconds of Arthur Wellesley, now Duke of Wellington, Marquis of Douro and the rest. I think your Grace would do well to avoid the disgrace of my refusal!"

The Duke stood looking down at his long, lean fingers that now tapped the table before him.

"Of that too I must take my chance with Posterity," he said dryly, "though I am aware that it is a more serious matter to have one's personal courage impugned by Mr. Assheton Smith than to be saddled with the responsibility for the death of Mr. Smith's protégé. . . . In short Mr.

Smith will not fight and the Duke of Wellington will not send his seconds to Mr. Smith. . . . We are Englishmen of position in a foreign country in time of peril and change. . . .”

“Why, if you can find a formula . . .” Mr. Smith said. His eyes glittered with excitement.

“I am looking for one,” the Duke rejoined. . . . “You wish for a formula to save the face of the Duke of Wellington, for the credit of your country.”

“I look for nothing else!” Mr. Smith said.

“Why,” the Duke answered, after he had pondered, “you may say that first the King of France was sick so that I could not go to him and that now I am so gripped that I cannot stir out and go to the King of France. So we cannot discuss the matter.”

Mr. Smith started with astonishment. The answer was exactly the heartless pronouncement that he had desired to get from the Duke that he was unable to believe in his ears. He exclaimed:

“You say that seriously. It is a pronouncement that none might save Ney by causing a revulsion in the minds even of his persecutors!”

The Duke answered: “Why, if that is what you came for you have it. For myself I am indifferent!”

“It is an answer that will convince the world,” Mr. Smith said. “I too should prefer lying abed by day with Betty Clandon to the society of Louis le Désiré in the evening!”

The Duke laughed dryly:

“Lady Clandon is in Belfast,” he said, “but if she were here I too should prefer it.”

As they had been leaving the room, Mr. Smith supporting the Corsican solicitously with a hand under his left armpit, the Duke had said:

"A moment, Mr. Smith. I care nothing as to who hears my opinions of Marshal Ney, a gentleman so vain that he cannot travel without a presentation sword so conspicuous that it procures his arrest—to our great inconvenience. . . ." It was indeed said that Ney at the house of a kinsman where he had been in hiding after Waterloo had left a presentation scimitar lying in that kinswoman's drawing-room and, visitors observing it and reporting on it to the sub-prefect, that official had argued that Ney must be in the house and so had effected his arrest. . . . "But," the Duke continued, "there are things that patriots we can only discuss under four eyes."

Mr. Smith, depositing Gatti on a leather-covered bench that was in the stone corridor, had returned into the Duke's room where he had stayed a long time. When he came out he was excited, animated and insistent. He insisted that Gatti should hurry his laborious steps down the long stone stairs. They were going at once to the Tuileries.

## CHAPTER THREE

“SO that the life of the Marshal turns in the end on the sole will of the Tsar!” Gatti said. He surveyed Hélène for a long silence with his one eye, mournful and scrutinizing.

“Dearest Hélène,” he said, “I spoke not unadvisedly but yet perhaps wrongly as to the fate that hangs over Frederick, your husband.”

She said: “No, no, dear Felice. You did right. You could see that I listened with breathless attention. I have heard Mr. Assheton Smith himself recount that interview, and to hear your confirmation at least gives my mind repose. . . . Mr. Smith is a very admirable person, I do not doubt, but he has been for so long buried in such a maze of intrigue and business that it is impossible at times not to let a suspicion of doubt of his motives cross one’s mind.”

Gatti elevated his one hand in the air and dropped it lowly.

“I used,” he said, “to think as you say you do. But since I have known that milder better I have come to see that his is a very natural and unsubtle character.” Mr. Smith, in short, acted on the lines of insatiable vanity with a subtle, unemotional, but never-ceasing industry. If you desired to know which way Mr. Smith was going from any given position you had only to consider at which point his vanity could be most—and most astonishingly—



gratified—and gratified in face of the world. So that his ambition to save Marshal Ney was simply and plainly a part of his life. He desired to save Ney in the first place because he had truly generous emotions, because the spectacle of Madame Aglaë's grief had indeed touched him, and because he thought that the credit of his country would be smirched if the scoundrelly enterprise were persevered in. But perhaps none of those motives would have spurred him to the amazing activities that he had displayed—for he was a naturally lazy man—had it not been that his vanity had been aroused at the idea that he alone might thwart not only the Duke of Wellington, whom he heartily disliked and despised, but also King Louis XVIII and half the potentates of the earth. So, that his heart was wholly engaged and his imperious will altogether set in motion in the enterprise of saving the Marshal, no human being could doubt. He had declared that never again would he cross saddle as Master of the Quorn if he did not have the Marshal either freely pardoned by the King, or at the very least safely exiled and leading a pastoral life in one or other of the Americas.

"So that, in the end," said Hélène, "we are all of us puppets in the game of this nabob whose money is his sole means of illustriousness and whose heart is as dry and thin as a last year's leaf!"

"Why," Gatti answered, "are we not all in the end the puppets of the gods?"

"Ay, but the men at whose hands we suffer are a little less than gods!" she answered bitterly.

He conceded that, in their separate roles, Michael Ney, the Baron de Frèjus, Mr. Assheton Smith—and the

greatest of all!—were a little less than gods. But he doubted if Jupiter had as many men in the hollow of his hands as any one of them, their influence over the fortunes and so the lives of their fellows being so enormous, Mr. Assheton Smith obtaining his power by prestige, the Baron de Frèjus his by gold, Michael Ney his by the desperation of his bravery—and the Emperor his by a combination of all three attributes. . . . Why, even the Tsar Alexander had a certain gloomy force of—you might call it conscience. Or it was perhaps more than conscience—pious *hubris*. . . .

He broke off to say, tentatively and as if advancing with fear along the ground:

“I would have you to know that Mr. Assheton Smith is not without his tenderness or his affections. He is difficult to engage but once his heart is interested it is of a great loyalty. He manifests a genuine and continuing affection for yourself, for Madame Aglaë . . .”

“Why, I know it,” Hélène said, “but we are women. . . .”

“It is nevertheless for your husbands and lovers that his exertions are expended.” He looked her carefully and cautiously in the eye. “You may, as you know, count me as your devoted lover, and the kindness and humanely thoughtful consideration that this milor has bestowed upon me are beyond belief. When my wounds have ached he has sat up whole nights with me since he believes himself gifted with healing properties.”

She said: “That then is only another of his ceaseless vanities. . . . He desires to be not only ruler, leech, healer, despot of modes . . .”

"He has," Gatti rejoined, "a very marvellous liniment of his own devising made for the relieving of the pains of his hunters and that has singularly relieved the ache of my wound. It is compounded of turpentine, the white of eggs and other things I forget. . . . And to see him with a horse—they will follow his stiff figure as a woman at the height of her passion will follow her lover to the world's end!"

"Why," she exclaimed harshly: "Tell me, then, about George Feilding. It is of him that you itch to speak. Mr. Assheton Smith went principally to the Duke of Wellington to speak about him. Yet you have told me of a whole long play of *Hamlet* without a Hamlet. . . . I am at my wits' end as it is with this fellow below stairs. A little more or a little less is much the same."

He mopped his brow with an old purple handkerchief. He asked: Phew! did she not suppose that the presence of the young man downstairs pleading with Madame did not give him as much of a pain in the back as her. He said he had not spoken of what Mr. Smith had said of the young man during his interview with the Duke because he did not know how she herself felt towards the young man.

"Well, you need not speak of it," she said; "Mr. Smith has already reported most of it to me—his solitudes, his despairs, the odours of the horses that the troopers cleaned below his windows in the barracks where he was confined: the upshot of the trial too and his—his admirable bearing. You see, I know. You might as well have told me."

He regarded her, pondering:

"It comes back to this," he said; "the life of the Marshal turns in the end on the sole will of the Tsar!"

He felt that in some mysterious way all their lives were bound up in that event, but the clue to the riddle he could not see. Thus in some way the life—the survival—of Frederick de Frèjus undoubtedly was bound up with the fate of Ney. But how? Mr. Assheton Smith was as earnest that Frèjus should be respited from time to time as that Ney should be saved. Yet no one—least of all Mr. Assheton Smith—was much interested in Frèjus. Frèjus was jovial, a *bon-vivant*, he gave enormous entertainments at which the silver-plate blazed like the sun and the champagne poured itself out like waterfalls. But in the end he was a financier—and financiers, if they may have mercy, excite seldom either the affection or the pity of their fellow men. There is too much debt in the world: a natural-born beggar will excite you to more exertion in his interests than the greatest of financiers come on ruin.

Yet from time to time Mr. Assheton Smith would say between his teeth:

"We must get that banker respited. . . . Do not forget to remind me that that banker must be respited!"

In the end he had been respited. . . . *Sine die!*

He lived in his cell in the Conciergerie, which was next to that of Ney himself, in the full splendour of the life of a financier. Going about everywhere with Assheton Smith, ostensibly in the role of interpreter, Gatti had been many times in the cell of Frèjus. . . . It was redolent of hot-

house blooms, oysters, sherbet of Shiraz, *cantatrices* from the opera, attar of roses, *foie gras*, oriental divans. . . . And, since Frèjus jocularly declined to discover where one jot of his millions had disappeared to, it was Mr. Smith who not only paid for but took pains to procure these pleasures for the banker. Yet Mr. Smith spent nothing on the Marshal, who, most of his goods having been sequestered, was dependent on Madame Aglaë for such comforts as she was able to afford him.

Mr. Smith conversed mostly in private with the Baron, Felice Gatti being left outside the cell door; but when the milor came out, Felice could always hear the Baron exclaiming after a riotous laugh:

*"C'est entendu. . . . It's understood. It's understood!"*

One day he had even asked the milor whether in the first place the Baron was certain to die and, in the second, whether he knew it.

The milor had answered gravely that there was no power on earth that could save Frederick Scheffauer, Baron de Frèjus, since he would stretch no hand to save himself. And it was to be doubted whether, even if he disclosed the secret places in which his wealth was hidden and excused their debts to all his debtors amongst the Ultras—whether even then they would spare his life. He knew, for one thing, too much about them—but even without that there was their cold longing to take human life. And again, even at that, the financier had his vanities that would support him into the tumbril and beyond. He was determined to leave his vast fortune to his wife.

Her defection from him had mortally wounded his pride; his rejoinder was to burden her with a wealth that



he knew her to scorn. She might refuse to handle it—but even at that he had so arranged matters that no one else could. He had faithful servants, and a certain probity is a necessary property amongst financiers. His moneys were in stocks in England, Austria, the Americas, Holland—in places where the Ultras could not get their fingers on them, for the Fusstossers, the Rothschilds, the van Burens and the rest could, as holders, be certain to be faithful to their trusts—even though it was a Fusstosser whose evidence was mainly responsible for bringing him to the salad basket. They were glad to be rid of his competition; but they could not afford to betray his trust in places where French law did not run and the *émigrés* were despised.

So no one could release the fortune of Frèjus but his wife; and even if she went into a convent and delivered the fortune to her order it must be her act and her volition. So he was as stubborn as his persecutors and upon the whole enjoyed life more. For, as he said, life consists in emptying so many hundreds of bottles of sillery or hermitage; consuming so many oysters, truffles and kegs of caviare. Normally you did not consume all that you might like to for fear of shortening your life, but if your life was to be shortened you could condense all those pleasures into as short a time as was given you. . . . On the other hand the Ultras had to fear that, as soon as he was dead, the bills they had given him years before might be presented by the respectful but perfectly remorseless Fusstossers, Rothschilds and the rest. So they were on the horns of a dilemma and had finally consented to the respite *sine die* that with perfect nonchalance Assheton



Smith had demanded, first of the King's First Minister, Decazes, and then of Louis himself.

They had hastened straight from the Duke's to the Tuileries where, finding Lord Castlereagh with the Comte Decazes, the English lord had introduced the milor straight into the presence of the sovereign. For some reason or other the King was padding slowly up and down a corridor which contained at one end a day-bed, some chairs and a desk, and which was lighted by candle-sconces at rare intervals on the walls.

Mr. Smith said subsequently that this was because the sovereign was crowded out of his palace by the *émigrés*, who claimed rooms under the protocol in the Tuileries; but that did not seem very reasonable to Gatti, who presumed that the sovereign there took his exercise. They stood in any case at one end of the corridor in a group until the sovereign approached, which he did very slowly, shuffling his feet.

Louis le Désiré was in truth a mountain of flesh, dressed in blue with white silk stockings and with a star on either breast. But, if he was obese, he appeared in no way either obtuse or ungracious. He was pleased to remark upon the hat that he presumed the milor as the arbiter of *ton* intended to make his subjects wear. He then fixed his rather piercing glance on Gatti, whom the milor announced as a poor suppliant to his Majesty and pensioner of his own, recounting the cripple's exploit at the battle of Mont St. Jean and begging for his reinstatement in his military rank—for, at that date—in October—Gatti had been ordered to consider himself quite simply drummed out of the army. The King asked the Comte Decazes, a debonair

and agreeable young man, to inquire into the case of Gatti.

That Gatti was pleased at this presentation of himself as a petitioner to a king who irresistibly reminded him of a ram, with his high nose, his grey waved hair, and his receding forehead—that Gatti was pleased could not be alleged. He nevertheless had acceded to the milor's manœuvre, which was, in effect, a sort of blackmail. "Here," in effect the milor seemed to say to such Royalists as they came across, "here is the soldier who has performed a feat such as has made France famous to the stars. Will you leave it to me—you Frenchmen!—to me a stranger and an enemy, to relieve his misfortune and assuage his sufferings?"

That done and being asked his next errand, the milor coolly desired the respite for the Baron de Frèjus, but that was a matter as to which the King had no personal views. He asked Lord Castlereagh—a lean, harassed and mournful nobleman with a great nose and enormous eyes—if he saw any reason why the milor should not be obliged, and bade Assheton Smith put that matter to the Comte Decazes, by whose judgment he was content to be guided. He said to Mr. Smith:

"You see, sir, how we are guided in all things by the methods of your constitution—how we consult our ministers, who, it is to be hoped, will bear any unpopularity that shall result from those deliberations."

At that his Majesty, raising his brows, said that he understood Mr. Assheton Smith was the richest commoner in the United Kingdom.

"Why, your Majesty," Mr. Smith said, "I have reason

to believe myself the richest man, peer, commoner or prince of the blood in the British dominions. The King may own more land as king, but as a private man I own far more and the King has, alas, no control of so much as a square rod of his possessions. The insufficiency of the Prince Regent's means to meet his Royal Highness's necessities are too well known."

"Why, then," the King said, "you must, milor, be one of the richest men the world has ever seen and could buy us and our poor palace many and many a time over!"

Mr. Smith, stiffly but precisely, set one knee on the ground, bending the other.

"Sire," he said, "I would willingly give a large share of my wealth for a stroke or two of your Majesty's pen on this paper or parchment that I present to you"—holding up a document that he had drawn from his bosom.

"That again," the King said with a little animation, drawing both his white hands back, "that again is matter for the Comte Decazes." He added: "And my lord Castle-reagh has his say in the matter. You perceive, milor, that your errand was not unforeseen."

At that Gatti shuffled off with himself for a pace or two, but not so far but that he could hear Mr. Assheton Smith's resonant voice say:

"Sire, your Majesty is reported as having said that the man for whom I petition you did you more harm by letting himself be taken than by his action on the 13th of March last past. If your Majesty now frees him shall not your Majesty negative the ill that was so done?"

His Majesty said: "Nay, an ill so easily negatived had been no ill!"

They talked, their heads—except the King's—in a bunch, and Gatti could not hear what they said. The King his hands behind his back, took a short turn, re-approached them, took another short turn and again came back, his agitation being evident in his pendulous cheeks and heavy eyes.

He said once: "*C'est ça! C'est ça!*" to the Marquis of Castlereagh and then rubbed his hands with an expression of slyness, and the conclave continued.

"In short," the milor said at last in a high tone, "if I bring you—or if the Comte Decazes should receive—a communication from the Tsar asking for clemency to the hero of Borodino. . . ."

"Sir," the Comte Decazes answered in the same high tone, "if you or anyone can procure that, it will very materially alter the situation."

The King then retired to the day-bed at the far end of the corridor and called Gatti to him as he sat, panting, his legs far apart, Gatti slipping and skating with his crutch and his stick, more than ever like a dishevelled bat in the dim light of the candles.

It was curious to him to stand in the presence of this potentate, he having been for so long the familiar of a greater. It was impossible to deny a certain quality of kingship to this immense being. He addressed Felice as a large, rather jocund bachelor might address a child—and that Gatti should not resent this was at least some proof of majesty. He began by asking Gatti what exactly he had done: Mr. Assheton Smith with the hyperbole that became him in presenting a petitioner had said that Gatti had almost reversed the fates of the battle of Waterloo.

"That is nonsense, Sire," Gatti had said. "If the guns had not been taken the battle would not have been lost. All that I did was, after they had been taken, to prevent, in some sort, for a short time their being used against Marshal Ney's and Marshal Kellermann's retreating. . . ."

The King said: "You were known by another name . . . as di . . . di . . . Do not prompt me! . . . di Vivario—as Gatti di Vivario. I never forget a face, seldom a name!"

"It is the royal gift, Sire," Felice said. "I was the Colonel-Count dei Gatti di Vivario before they drummed me out of the army!"

The King slightly raised his fat white hands from his fat cream-coloured thighs.

"There are those," he said, "who are more royalist than the King. We shall see what we can do to remedy that inadroitness!"

Gatti made a feint at a bow, ducking his chin over his crutch. He said he asked no more than to remain as he was, for he was in no condition to serve his Majesty.

"My friend," the King said, "we have shown that we were familiar with—or if not familiar with your name, at least not oblivious of it—and familiar with your exploit, which was such as to make every true Frenchman blush with pleasure at the recital. You shall find that your King is no less a Frenchman in that particular than the meanest of his subjects that salutes you as you walk the boulevards!"

He hesitated for a moment, moving his hands at random and muttering: "M'm, m'm, m'm!" Then he said:



"We have borrowed from our friends the English their constitution which ensures that a king may only act through his ministers; so, as we do not know how that constitution works, we do not know how we may reward you. But be sure that your face will not be forgotten by us, nor your valour."

Gatti made another convulsive movement towards a bow. The King, rolling his elephantine bulk to one side first, then to the other on the velvet cushion on which he sat, held the back of his cold, gouty hand to the other's lips.

"*Mon colonel*," he said, "or if you prefer it, Monsieur le Comte, you are the first subject to receive whose salute we have almost stood up. . . . Bid the milor convey your wishes to us through the fitting channel. Be sure we shall not be niggardly!"

. . . Till then, in effect, they had been niggardly enough, having conferred on him a fortnight ago no more than the honorary rank of Colonel-Inspector with no pay attached. But the milor bade him be patient; he assured him that the King had not forgotten him, that he himself, the milor, was unsleeping in his service, and that shortly he should have a post that should astonish him. The milor was then engaged in negotiations with the Comte Decazes as to which Gatti himself was in ignorance. So the Corsican was content to wait, though indeed he asked nothing of the ruling powers and if he could have had the capital with which to start his café would have been content altogether. The milor however, urged him to patience. The capital for a café, he said, was a small thing and Gatti might be certain of it ten times over—though whether



the city of Paris would ultimately suit him as a locality, the milor was doubtful. He suggested either Corte in his native island or the still further atmosphere of Buenos Aires—of which however he knew nothing.

Of the mysterious powers of Mr. Smith, Gatti had evidence enough to make him very content to wait. For in the case of the young George Feilding Mr. Smith had showed himself not only powerful but perspicacious. It had been a fact that during nearly the whole of the incarceration and trial of the young man the milor had had for him, in his coat pocket, a free pardon signed by his Royal Highness the Prince Regent. It was accompanied, it is true, by a cool letter from an intimate of Mr. Smith's, called Howard, who was about the person of the Prince at Carleton House.

Mr. Howard said that to calm the natural anxieties of Mr. Smith as to the fate of his young friend the pardon was enclosed in the packet that brought the letter. But his Royal Highness the Duke of York was anxious that the document should not be used unless a condemnation resulted from the court martial and that the young Feilding—who was surely sufficiently rewarded in that during his absence with Boney the natural course of seniority and regimental vacancies had brought him his captaincy!—the young Feilding should be kept from access to his regimental comrades. There was no doubt, Mr. Howard said, that amongst the junior officers of certain regiments of the Army of Occupation a strong movement existed for the rescue by force of arms of Ney. And, with all due respect for Mr. Smith's belief in the spotless integrity of Captain Feilding, Carleton House and the Horse Guards

he could not but feel that if such a conspiracy existed amongst hot-blooded young devils, Captain Feilding was the very person to become its nucleus. They were anxious to oblige Mr. Assheton Smith to the extent of reason but they would prefer him not to upset the junior ranks of the forces through the activities of his admirable protégé. Moreover it would be to Feilding's advantage to clear himself by trial if he could. Mr. Howard added that, as to Mr. Smith's friend the financier, authority was ready to acquiesce in his respite, but Mr. Howard begged Mr. Smith to understand that if any ultimate loss resulted to Mr. Smith's friends in England, from the highest to the lowest—why, from the highest to the lowest, from the purlieus of Carleton House to the stables of Windsor, Mr. Smith might await a very considerable unpopularity and might in the end have to recoup.

Mr. Howard added a final postscript to the effect that the whole land lamented Mr. Smith's arbitrary absence from the mastership of the Quorn. His deputy Mr. Feilding, Sen., made an admirable substitute but his language to the field had latterly been such as scorched the very eyelids of their mounts and they sighed for the more elegant vituperations of Mr. Smith. . . . Mr. Feilding, in fact, seemed to have more than one shot in his locker, bee in his bonnet, or what you would. He had positively fought a fighting chimney-sweep for alleged riding down the hounds—which the chimney-sweep had been much too good of a sportsman really to do.

From the Tuileries, Mr. Smith and Gatti had gone to the Hotel Monchelu, which, being not only next to the

Tsar's quarters at the Elysée but next also to the house that Mr. Smith had hired, they had had some opportunity to repair Mr. Smith's attire. For, though the more battered his companion appeared, the better it suited the book of Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith himself would be consumed with concern if a very little dust settled on so much as the easily brushed *revers* of his coat.

And they had been driving in a monstrously high chaise-and-four ever since early that morning, having been to see Marshal Blücher amongst the dreadfully destroyed apple trees and furniture of the gardens and salons where the Prussians were quartered at St. Cloud.

The visit to the Marshal, if it had helped them little, had done no harm to the cause of the other Marshal in the Conciergerie. . . . Very old and not even yet recovered from his exertions in the Waterloo Campaign, the Prussian commander-in-chief had proved singularly benevolent and huskily courteous; but his French was weak and the French of the generals surrounded by whom he chose to receive the milor, was weaker still. They had no English there and such German as Gatti knew he had learned in South Germany whilst billeted in one or other farmhouse, and as it was almost entirely dialect of the Rhine, he was nearly incomprehensible to the Prussians though he understood them fairly well.

The Marshal was in white with the scarlet ribbon of an order like a cravat about his neck. He was about to pay a visit to the Austrian Headquarters and, out of courtesy, had adopted the uniform of the Kaiseliks. He sat stockily behind a table, clasping and unclasping his ancient hands and saying: Yes . . . no! . . . Yes . . . no! . . . Dis-

cipline was a very necessary thing, the betrayal of one's colours a very dreadful one. Humanity also had its claims. Military valour was to be esteemed. Professional soldiers were more humane to each other, even though enemies, than civilians. For himself he wished well to any skilful swordsman—*beau sabreur*. But these things were out of his hands. He himself would neither advocate nor obstruct the pardon of the Prince de la Moskwa.

He asked Mr. Assheton Smith a great many questions, and with some animation, as to the breeding of his stallions and the breeds of his hounds. He understood that the hounds of the Quorn Hunt were longer-legged than those of the Pytchley and other packs because they were bred from moorland packs who had to be longer-legged for stepping over the heather. Did Mr. Smith, in fact, wear scarlet at the head of his hounds? That was famous! And blew a horn! So . . .

Mr. Smith was of opinion that the Marshal had been coached in those questions by members of his staff so that he might have some topic of conversation as a compliment to the milor.

The whole affair resolved itself more and more clearly into a matter of high politics. This Gatti was reluctant to credit, for he was of a type of mind that does not easily believe that such a thing as high politics exists. Mankind itself he had been taught by the learned Warenovius to believe was in large part imbecile and diplomatists the more imbecile part of mankind. But gradually in this affair a pattern began to manifest itself to him.

In the affair of Marshal Ney neither humanity nor an

esteem for valour, neither regard for public opinion nor even any esteem for military discipline, played any marked part—at any rate in any of the participants save the Tsar Alexander. It resolved itself into a duel between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh on the one part and Prince Metternich on the other, the one side finding it necessary to have a strong France in Europe, the other seeking to weaken the Bourbons and so the country. And it was taken as a rule of the game that, if Ney was pardoned, the cause of at any rate Louis XVIII must be irretrievably injured.

Metternich Gatti never saw, nor as far as he knew did the milor, but an Austrian-Polish prince Czartoryski at a rout at Madame Récamier's gave Mr. Smith a résumé of the Prince's wishes. The Austrian ruler was said to take an eminently serious view of the crime of betraying one's monarch; Prince Metternich on the other hand was desirous of seeing Ney pardoned so that public opinion throughout the world might be assuaged. Indeed, so strongly did the Prince take the view that clemency by any one ruler strengthened the hands of all the rulers of the world that, if Ney were pardoned by King Louis, he would be ready to consider advising his sovereign to make certain concessions. . . .

This of course was pure hypocrisy. The concessions—whatever they were, for Gatti himself never knew—that Metternich spoke of were those that he found himself being driven into if Austria was to continue to receive its subsidies from Great Britain. They had no doubt to do with the Rhineland frontiers of France which the British desired to secure, and Metternich, if he were driven into



strengthening France by those means, was determined to weaken her by strengthening, on the one hand, the Bonapartists and disgusting the Ultras with the monarchy of which they were the chief props. He declared himself, however, unable to act without the sanction of his master, the Emperor Francis Joseph, and declared that the Emperor would never move in the matter without the sanction or request of his august cousin, the Tsar. . . . So Quixote-Smith and his crippled Sancho found themselves in the salon of Madame de Krudener towards seven of the evening of an early October day.

The curtains were all tight closed and an almost insupportable smoke of incense stifled them in that double room, the outer of whose halves was in gloom, illuminated by the blaze from the ikons, altar cloths, candelabra and shrines in precious metal that shone from the recess.

Their first visit—and their visits since had been so frequent that Gatti now was unable to disentangle the memories of any one from those of any other—their first visit, then, had been very short, and they had not even very fully perceived Madame Krudener—or Gatti with his one eye had not, though the milor may have seen her more fully.

To Gatti she appeared forty or more—the milor afterwards said with some indignation that she was much less. She had henna-coloured hair, a broad face, an opulent but not too opulent figure. But for Gatti the main point about that visit had been its air of mystery—or pietistic magic. Himself an atheist of the old republican, Jacobin type, he regarded the rites of Rome as transparent mummeries. But this dim interior, with its aperture revealing



the barbaric splendours of the Orthodox cult, affected him unusually. He was unwilling to accord power to a Deity—to any Deity save Reason—but, if there were a Deity, unholy and mysterious, here, he felt, might be its shrine. And Madame de Krudener might be its officiant!

She had, grouped around her, a number of singular forms, mostly in black. They had queer, high, conical hats; robes that floated in unusual angles, and whenever the prophetess spoke their dimly discerned white faces went together and a thin whisper pervaded the space.

No doubt their entry had been dramatic enough. They had pushed ajar a heavy, padded, leather-covered swing door such as they have in churches and, since they had confronted a blaze of light, no doubt the light on them shone as you may see it do at the entry of a favourite actor on the stage. And Mr. Smith, though he may have been blinded by the light, adopted and kept a sufficiently impressive attitude—the right foot advanced, the right hand supported by the cane on the floor, the great cloak over the left arm, the hat in the left hand. He appeared, too, more than usually fair; his coat was of nearly white cloth; the Assheton diamond flashed from his voluminous cravat. . . . His features were composed, melancholy, high and disdainful. Gatti himself, in his patron's shadow, dark and shapeless, must have appeared a mere Lucifer crouched beside a St. Michael.

A low exclamation, like a shriek, came from their left hand and the sibilant whisper went round among the dark forms. A woman's voice exclaimed: "*Ein Held—ein Ritter!—kommt vom Norden!*"—A hero—a Saviour!—cometh from the North!

Madame de Krudener stood beside the mirror, the outlines of her face and hair lightly gilded by the illumination from the altars, her hands uplifted, her face full of alarm or ecstasy.

He said resonantly: "I am Assheton Smith! I come to ask for the pardon of the Prince de la Moskwa!" She shrieked and covered her face with her hands. Again the whispers went round amongst her assistants. In the further room a panel painted to show a gilt, angular Madonna holding a gilt and swaddled babe, slid back and a dejected form, a round-headed, baldish, dun-coloured man slowly shuffled out. The panel slid to behind him and he fell, very slowly and with difficulty, onto his knees. He crossed himself repeatedly and in a complicated manner. Then he covered his face with his stubby hands and remained motionless. He was accounted the most powerful man in the world.

During the next two days Mr. Assheton Smith was mostly engaged reading a book on his day-bed in his panelled dressing room. This was the more remarkable since, although he was a classical scholar of some elegance, he was never seen to read—and indeed he read slowly and as if with some labour. From time to time he would look up at Gatti and exclaim, haughtily and as if Gatti had contradicted him:

"This appears to me to be a remarkable passage," and he would read out: "'Her bosom palpitating with rage, Valérie exclaimed: 'Coward that you are. Your trembling conscience shall force you into unhanding me!'''"

Or he would say:

"This thought is singularly well expressed: 'The desolation of a parent at the sudden demise of a cherished infant was as nothing to the grief experienced by Valérie at this tragic occurrence!'" From time to time he would start and exclaim: "Is this possible? Can such villainy exist?"

How, in the short moment of agitation that their visit had lasted, Madame de Krudener had contrived to hand the mior that copy of her book, Gatti never knew. It is certain that Mr. Smith was carrying it in his right hand when they descended the gilded stairs of the Hotel Monchelu. And it is equally certain that that book—called *Valérie*—played a remarkable part in the association of the mior and the prophetess. He read it even to her, herself, seated on a rather low chair beside her whilst she reposed on her day-bed in the attitude then rendered fashionable by Madame Récamier.

Nay, he read a vehement passage from *Valérie* to a fashionable assembly that included Madame de Staël, Madame Récamier, the Prince Czartoryski, Benjamin Constant, the pastor Fontanes, Mademoiselle Decazes and who knew whom. Standing up and his coat-tails appearing to fly out behind him, he held the volume in the air and declaimed long sentences as to mercy, the softer emotions, generosity and the anguish of the heroine as to the fate of her life's hero, who had gone upon a journey into frozen wastes.

The audience had applauded with vociferation, first one, then the other of the two writing-ladies rising from the couch which had been provided for her and with tear-stained faces embracing Madame de Krudener, who re-

mained upon her day-bed. Madame de Staël however left immediately afterwards, being only *en passage* through Paris to her beloved Venice—the Venice of *Corinne*. The remaining audience exclaimed with one voice though in widely differing accents that that admirable passage proved finally the necessity for a free pardon for Michael Ney. And all eyes went to Madame de Krudener—as they always went to Madame de Krudener.

Madame de Krudener, however, raising tear-stained cheeks to the mirror, stretching up one hand to lay on his fore-arm, nevertheless slowly and doomfully shook her head. She had hitherto declared that Ney, as coming from the South, was the enemy of Saviours from the North. Now she was beginning to be over-persuaded.

That afternoon—the afternoon of the 10th November when Gatti sat reflecting in the room of Madame Ney and gazing dubiously at the face of Hélène de Frèjus—Madame de Krudener had been really ecstatic. On the day before the Court Martial on Ney had declared its incompetence to try a peer of France, and now or never had been the time to strike in favour of the hero of Borodino.

The afternoon had nevertheless begun with a slight check. They had been privileged to have the society of the Tsar, who had come to assist at a trance that was going to visit the woman Rummel or Krummer: Gatti refused to remember her name. But Madame de Krudener had a host of supporters of a chiliast complexion—chiliasts being Millennialists or believers in an immediate Second Coming of the Redeemer—and they mostly had singular and disagreeable names—there was the young Empalatz or Empalast, the old and untidy Fontanes, a

pastor with a bedraggled wife; a number of lay members of Orthodox convents and monasteries in singular black costumes. But of them all the Rummel or Krummer woman seemed to Gatti the most disagreeable.

In a chair before the ikons—the Tsar sitting like Hamlet in the play-scene very much in the shadow to the right of the room—this fair, pasty, squat and obese woman in the dark blue costume with the horn-shaped coif of one of the chiliast orders, had duly thrown herself into a trance. Her pallid face, the eyes closed, looked upwards; she raised her deep-sleeved arms as if pointing up an invisible ray that came from the ceiling; she extended them before her as if inviting the embrace of an invisible being. She groaned, sobbed; the tears ran down her cheeks; she writhed with her whole body.

The assistants, the poor Russians, Courlanders and Germans at the back of the room kept up a perpetual echo of groans, sobs and ejaculations. From time to time one or other of them fell to the ground and was removed with singular expedition and singularly little noise. At each of these occurrences the Tsar nevertheless looked irritably round. He was in no propitious mood.

Those poor people had disposed of their farms, their shops, their small flocks to follow Madame de Krudener towards the Millennium, as indeed her singular gifts of overwhelming her fellows with unanalysable emotions had caused many thousand of poor people to do. The Tsar had promised them a territory in the Crimea, but the Crimea was a distant land and they were wearied with their travels afoot from the ends of Europe. So Alexander had already expressed distaste for that cohort that dogged his



footsteps and were too holy to be roughly rebuffed. It was known too that he had already remonstrated with Madame de Krudener for declaring to all and sundry who came to her salon that she and she only had finally revised the treaty of the Holy Alliance that was shortly, at the hands of the two Emperors and their subjects and dependants, to spread peace and bliss through the world with Metternich as its prophet. The Tsar was reported to have said that he had been made to appear ridiculous!

So when at the end of the trance of Madame Rummer he spoke two or three words of an eminent coldness and then prepared to leave the room, a certain consternation spread itself throughout the assembly. It would appear that Madame Rummer, as the result of her trance, had declared that a celestial visitor had ordered her to advise the Tsar to spend a great portion of his earthly fortune in endowing the Order to which she, Madame Rummer, belonged. And the Tsar was reported to have answered coldly that he had too many similar revelations at the hands of various other Orders to be seriously impressed. . . . Gatti did not of course understand Russian but that had been how it had been reported to him.

The Tsar, his silhouette square and ungainly and singularly round-headed, had begun to cross before the ikons to go to his panel in the wall that led to his apartments in the Elysée. He stood bowing for a long time and then, crossing himself, returned to lean over Madame de Krudener, who was still in the chair she had occupied at his side. The whispers of dismay that had been going up from the rear of the assembly became an agitated, tense hold-



ing of the breath. He spoke for a minute in the lady's ear and then, genuflecting and signing himself again, made his way towards the panel in the wall beside the ikons. It would appear that this panel opened not by means of a spring but by human agency, for Alexander having gently rapped on the framework at the side and the panel delaying to run back he stamped his foot with some irritation.

Into the silence that till his disappearance held the company in breathlessness Madame Krudener, her face alight, cried:

"Our little Father the Tsar, by order of the holy beings, has decided to demand the pardon of the Prince de la Moskwa!" Her arms outstretched, she threw herself into those of the milor! "A Saviour from the North!" she cried.

It cannot have been ten minutes after that before, in the buzz of ecstasy and repose that was over that assembly, the young George Feilding, who had been talking to a young girl, ran suddenly to the milor and, exclaiming that he had found his Hélène, had darted from the room. They had, the young girl and he, probably been talking of the joy that would be in the household of Aglaë and no doubt Mlle. Decazes had said that Hélène de Frèjus too would be overjoyed in that house. Gradually, following the young man, the other guests had drifted away until, the milor ordering Gatti to find George Feilding, the milor and the lady were left alone.

A certain delicacy—nay, a certain dread, had prevented Gatti from announcing the tidings of the promised

pardon to Madame Aglaë and Hélène. In the ordinary course of events he would have been first influenced by the idea that his patron should give the news of his own achievement in his own person. Then he would have been influenced by the remembrance that these two women were in great anxiety and he might have abandoned the sentimental interests of Mr. Smith and have told them, swiftly, and at the first moment.

But fear had restrained him. . . . Looking back at those two as he went out of the door, Judas had seemed to wink at him! The atmosphere had been hot with passions. The ill-temper of the Tsar had left behind him a heavy malaise. Behind those two as they faced each other had appeared a great, blazing ikon that Felice had not before observed; but Madame Krudener had—or had access to—a vast store of these objects and they were changed very frequently. This was an image with figures very nearly life-size. A silver Christ walked upon a lapis-lazuli sea with bubbles of pearls; Peter sank to his middle at the side of the Redeemer, and Judas, known by his absence of halo and scarlet hair and beard, regarded Peter with a leer. . . . This leer he had turned upon Gatti as he turned back at the door: nay, he had turned the leer first upon that couple and had then looked into Gatti's eyes. . . .

Dusk had now long since fallen in the tall sewing-room of Madame Aglaë, and Hélène had lit a candle in a tall brass standard at her side. She sewed and sewed, her head bent over her coarse, greyish stuff, the little finger of her right hand curled above the others as she drew

the long threads to their extreme lengths. She said:

"You have slept, my dear Felice. You were tired!"

He exclaimed: "No! No!" and shivered. "We must go to Corte. In Corte there is sun. . . . Was not the milor here?"

She said no, no one had disturbed them.

He said: "I am afraid! I am afraid!"—he did not know why—and added: "the 10th of November is an ill-omened day."

It came suddenly to his lips to say:

"Dearest Hélène, if mercy were shown . . ." But he did not dare. He said: "Let us go to Corte, you and I. This is no place for soft human flesh. People have eyes like pebbles and the air is hard."

She said: "If there was a convent with rules of perpetual silence I would go there and you could wear away your life beneath the walls."

He said: "There is the convent on the wall; I do not know the order, but it was from one of the windows that the enemy held out our general's son when we Corsicans were taking the city by storm from the oppressors. . . . It is an old story. But I believe it is a sufficiently strict congregation. No one ever sees the sisters once they enter the walls. Not even when they are buried, and it is said they dig their own graves on the day they take the veil."

"Why," she said, "if there were a shop you could make into a café by the convent gate and I were within you might listen for my passing bell."

He said: "Oh Hélène! Oh, Hélène! . . . If mercy now is shown us—to this household—will you not show mercy to your lover?"

She cried out and stood up, dropping her sewing to her feet.

"It is very painful," he said, "to perceive daily the torture of a fine young man!"

She said: "No, no, no, no!" her face taking on an aspect of terror. "I knew," she said, "that you must come to that—that that has been on your tongue this whole afternoon."

"Madonna Hélène!" he said, "the good are also merciful. In what has this young man offended you?"

She said: "In that he is . . . In that he is my . . . He is too . . ." Her eyes stared from her lids; she surveyed him harshly:

"Ha, Felice," she said, "it is true that you are an emissary of your patron: but your patron is anti-Christ. He too has tempted and tempted me. Is my soul nothing to you that you would sacrifice it to my . . . to my lover? Is his then nothing to you! . . ."

It had shocked him to hear Mr. Assheton Smith called anti-Christ—not that he did not think that might be the case. Madame de Krudener had called him the Saviour from the North. She had, he knew, suggested that the milior should found a colony in an isle in the Mediterranean there to await and enact the second coming. . . . A Saviour from the North might well be anti-Christ!

"No, no!" he said, "I am no emissary from Mr. Assheton Smith; in truth he so forces you to his will that there is no knowing . . ."

He fumbled in the pocket that was under his pinned left sleeve.

"See," he said. He had produced with an air of repul-

sion a crumpled object of white satin. "It is that I am to wear in my hat tomorrow at the milor's compulsion. And I am to kiss the hands of the Duc Decazes—and the other white, gouty ones. . . . At the milor's compulsion!"

He added hoarsely: "And you, I shall see often, Madonna Hélène, for as I told you—or maybe I did not tell you, I am to command the guard over your husband in jail." He added: "What this all is I do not know. But this I tell you . . . If you will go with your lover to Ajaccio—to Ajaccio where He was born . . . I will tell your husband you are gone to the Indies."

She cried out: "Oh, villain! Villain! Villain!"

"Why," he said, "if I am put by the milor and the Comte Decazes as guard to your husband it may well be that your husband is to escape. Then you must go away to have the enjoyment of your lover. I can understand that whilst your husband lies under sentence of death your delicacy may well keep you from his rival. But suppose he is to live. . . . I do not know that he is to live—but what else is one to think. He owes the ransoms of three kings to the milor; the Comte Decazes is a poor man; Louis is the will-less subject of his minion the Comte Decazes. . . . An escape is not a pardon. Let the Ultras rage as they will it is on me rather than on the King that their wrath must fall and my back is broad enough to bear their wrath for the sake of the King and of France. . . ."

She came up to him and gripped him by his own wrist.

"Listen, Felice!" she said, thought she had not listened to him. "Listen well to me. Do you know the story of the joyous companion—who was in effect St. Peter? How he

took the dead daughter of the king and mincing her flesh and boiling her bones, made of them all a paste and, moulding them together, she came alive again."

He said: "That is horrible. I warrant it is a German story. But what is that to me?"

She said: "Only this: that if you were St. Peter and so moulded me again I could not go to my lover's arms."

He exclaimed: "What? What?"

She said: "If you were God you could not do it!"

He said: "To God all things are possible!"

She answered: "Not that!"

He remained pondering for a long time. The great house was silent all round them in the gloom of the November night. She had scissors hanging by a tape to the black girdle of her high-waisted black gown.

"If he were your father . . ." he speculated blankly at last. "If you had borne him. . . ." He muttered: "M'm . . . M'm. . . . M'm . . . ." At last he erected his spine:

"Why, yes," he said, "you must go into a convent!"

Madame Ney came into the deep shadows that hung like black cobwebs about the tall door. Her white handkerchief that she held in her hand was the most visible point of her tall person that the shadows seemed to render taller. She begged Felice to go to the milor: he appeared to be seriously deranged.

He was much disturbed because there seemed to be no possibility that the Marshal should not go before the Peers of France for a trial. He had had an almost certainty that it would be otherwise after the military court had refused to try him. Now there appeared to be no hope.



## CHAPTER FOUR

**G**EORGE FEILDING ran with extraordinary speed towards the black figure of Madame de Frèjus that in the winter morning came over the frozen grass towards him. She was dressed with a tremendous amplitude of black skirt; a high hunting hat like a man's except that the broad brim turned down and waved a little, letting drop a thick black veil that hid her features. He had nevertheless known her—at a great distance, as she came out of the entry of the Little Luxembourg gardens. He was up against the wall of the Closerie des Lilas, his back to it. He had been looking, without hope, for assistance.

He had seen the curve of the figure; the way she carried the superfluity of the hunting skirt. Had he not seen her in the long-grass country?

He ran, panting with apprehension, crying out continuously:

“Go back! You must not come here!” His eyes bulged from his head like those of a maniac; his mouth hung open when he did not shout.

The Place in front of the cabaret with its long white wall was deserted; mist hung about the upper boughs of the naked trees of the avenue; in the brumous and dim distances of the road that went down to the Pont St. Michel were the bearskins and bayonets of a squad of soldiers. They were disappearing very slowly, marching

desultorily, their immensely tall bearskins bent forward as if they pondered dejectedly or were very weary. They might well. No man among them would ever hold up his head again.

He ran and ran, for it seemed an age of running, his soles beating on the grey, frozen turf. There was rime in the blades of grass. He ran for an age; the soldiers had marched off—an age ago. It must have been dreadful to stand before that wall in that cold. . . . But the dead man's hand when he touched it had been tepid. His mind hummed: "*And when the doughty Douglas saw the Percy die . . .*" A pace, pace, pace of his soles. "*He took the dead man by the hand . . .*" A pace, pace, pace of his soles. What a devil Assheton Smith was! . . . *He took the dead man by the hand . . . And cried 'Ah wae is me!* Pace, pace, pace! . . . Well, George Feilding had taken the dead man by the hand! No man could say he had not!

The sense of the corpse behind his back was a living thing; he felt its influences boring between his shoulders. Lying in the form of a cross, the head away from the wall, the face to the sky! He must have twisted round in falling, for he had faced his butchers all right. You would have thought he must have fallen on his face. . . . His figure had been obscured by the smoke of the muskets. . . . But you had not dared to look! You stood with averted glance. . . . No, with head hanging. . . . The high hat—it was queer to observe—had fallen forward a full three yards as if it desired to be first in the eyes of the spectators. . . . Well, it was prominent enough. As alive as its late owner. . . . More intact certainly!

But perhaps Assheton Smith was not a devil! Somebody must die: it was evident somebody must die! Then . . .

He was in front of Hélène—a black column, the face invisible on account of the black veil. You saw strange dim eyes, unknown dim features. He was panting and shouting like a lunatic but within he was calm. . . . Why must you have the torture of being calm within when your outside impulses forced you to behave like a lunatic?

He was shouting: "Turn round. I order you to go back": he was holding his hat, the inside towards her, right in front of her face. . . . Hat by Chickering and Fogg! The dead man's hat too probably displayed the lion and unicorn of that celebrated maker. No, it did not display it to the sky. It was *his* face that tranquilly inspected the low clouds . . . tranquilly and with austerity.

Hélène de Frèjus swayed a little back on her fixed feet—as a matador does before the charge of a bull. She was avoiding his hat. . . . Well, it must be stifling to have a hat held before your face. He exclaimed:

"Turn round. Let us go back to the garden!"

His hand stretched itself out—his right hand. It was the left that held the hat. His voice said for him:

"Oh, Hélène!"

She shrank her whole body back, avoiding the pollution of his touch.

She said, with her black-gloved hand over her heart: "No one could have known I was coming here!"

"No," he said, "I came here by an order. For a different purpose. . . . Turn back. . . . If I had known you

were coming here I should have respected . . ." He said: "But no! I should not have respected your privacy. You have no right to privacy from me!"

The dead figure, extended behind him, overwhelmed his mind. He knew nothing of perspective. Was it visible from where they stood? He dare not turn round for fear her glance should follow his. . . . From there perhaps she could see only the top of the head concealing the trunk. Perhaps not the feet that stuck up. . . . The hat, for sure. By Chickering and Fogg. . . . Or perhaps she could see nothing because of her black veil. It blew out a little each time she breathed. . . .

It was extraordinary to be confronted by the column of ebony that she made—as if within a cylinder there breathed an object of which one had once had the intimate thoughts but that was now gone strange—as milk goes sour when there is lightning in the air.

He said: "I will have you turn round. We will go into the park together. You and I have things to talk of."

He said: "You shall turn."

She exclaimed: "You will allow me to pass!"

He cried out: "Never! Never! Never!"

Or only over his dead body, as they say! She however could not kill him.

She said, curiously, as if it were a threat, her breath blowing out her veil twice: "I was going to the garden of the Closerie, my life having ended there."

He said: "You cannot go there now. You must wait. An hour! Two hours! Then you can go."

She said: "I cannot wait an hour. I must go. If not I

cannot go for the last time to the spot where for the last time, too, I thought of you with love and my life ended."

Her voice was curious: level; passionless; without inflections; like the fluting of a bird. It was perhaps the veil that gave the impression that a dead woman was speaking.

She said: "My husband is . . . was . . . How do I know? To be murdered at nine. . . ."

He exclaimed: "It is striking the quarter. . . . You knew then that he . . ." A mellow bell behind his back said through the freezing air: "Time . . . is . . . fly . . . ing!"

She said: "Yes. . . . Last night, past midnight, Mr. Assheton Smith came to me and gave me the news. . . . Did you not know? . . . I bade my husband farewell at one and swore to him that I would not stay an hour in this city after his death. So I must go. Beside Gatti awaits me and the horses cannot stand in this frost. . . . Did you not know that Frederick was to . . . is . . ."

He stammered: "I did not know. . . . I d-d-do!" He was shivering or stammering.

He had the extraordinary sense that behind him the corpse, lying cruciform as Jesuits do before they take their vows, was grinning at his dilemma. As skulls grin!

She said: "I told my husband my plans before I left him. He was, you know, a very brave man. The bravest of the brave."

At that the boy screamed.

"Not that at least. . . ."

"I may well say that," she answered; "he took here the

place of Michael Ney. Why should he not also have his sobriquet?"

George Feilding staggered back.

"You *knew* . . ." he said, "yet you could come. *Here!*"

"Why," she said, "it is natural—it is perhaps seemly—before going on a long journey to pay tribute to one's dead. . . . To the living dead and the dead. . . . You are dead to me, you know. . . . I wished to go to the last place in which for the last time I thought—oh forgive me, God of mercy!—of you with the love of the body. . . . But if you will not let me pass, let us go back. . . ."

He was unwilling to go and leave that dead man alone. How could he be left lonely? It was his wife's place to cleanse the clotted blood from the poor chestnut hair; to wash the poor body—oh my God, oh my God! To compose the features. . . . How could the late Frèjus lie there and so grin at the heavens? But in effect he did not grin. He appeared commanding and austere. It was he, George Feilding, who had imagined the grin. . . . As he had grinned in past days, seeing Hélène and himself come out of a bosquet or shrubbery.

She said: "Come. Let us go back. Since you are here you may walk with me. It is sin, but if God is to be moved by prayers it shall be my last."

He exclaimed: "How can you style it as a sin? That is a question of . . . of . . ."

Ought she then not to imprint the last salute? . . . He was about to say: "Do you not know that the body of your late husband lies there?" But it was evident that she did not know what lay before the blank wall. He asked instead:



"If you go so soon you cannot play your last . . . respect . . . tribute . . . salute. . . ."

"Why," she answered, "you cannot keep me in this accursed city on that pretext. Frèjus swore me—he swore me on the gospels—that I would not look upon his face after he was dead. He said that the faces of the guillotined . . . In short he had a horror. . . . He need not have. . . . What Margaret Roper could do I could. . . ." She said: "Let us talk of indifferent things. . . . You go where and when? . . ."

He said: "Mr. Assheton Smith awaits me with a berline at the Portè St. Denis."

"Then you go to Calais or Havre de Grace. . . ."

He said: "To Havre. . . ."

She exclaimed quickly: "Do not tell me. I know. I know. You go to le Havre. And the Colemans await you with a ship. That is they will await you unless a fair wind springs up. And Elizabeth Coleman in her dimities and furs shall spend day and night in the chapel of St. Nicholas-le-Havre praying that a fair wind shall not spring up till you are aboard their ship. . . . You see I know. It is not proper to torture me. . . . But it is no torture to me. . . . Only it is a last straw that might have been spared me. . . ."

He said: "Bessie Coleman is a child. . . . Seventeen . . . Eighteen . . . I do not know. A little sister!"

She swung on her heel and pointed with her riding crop.

"Come, let us go," she said. "The good Felice awaits me with the horses at the north entrance to the Little Luxembourg. We shall ride south . . . to Corsica . . ."

He could not but exclaim: "To the island of Corsica!"

"Why, it is an island!" she said. They were now walking and a measure of calmness came to him as it left her. "It began with an island—and it shall end with an island. That is to say that it is your islanders that have ended what He began. . . . And so I go to an island as you to a Continent of Colemans! But for me a convent: Colemans, Continents, Convents. . . . It is in that way that the world wags. . . ."

He began to say: "I beseech you . . . I swear to you . . . I will wait. . . ."

She tore suddenly the veil from her face, flinging it back over her hat.

"You shall not wait," she cried, "I enjoin upon you not to wait. I command you not to wait." He had not dared to look at her face. . . . "Why, look me in the face!" she said. "You shall not see me look a hag because of five months of waiting under the shadow of death. . . . I looked at my face this morning in a glass!"

Her face was pale, a little square with the determination of her closed jaws; her brown eyes were fixed upon him and dire.

"Why no," she said hollowly, "you shall not wait for me. . . . I could spit in your face if you said again that you would. . . . Merciful God, what do I say? The sins of the fathers. . . . Pour out every drop of blood from your warm veins; cleanse your soul as if with sand and scouring paper; burn up your flesh . . . For the sin you have committed. . . . And I will do the same. But have twenty children by Elizabeth Coleman and twenty by

your negresses. . . . Oh you poor oaf . . . you poor brother-oaf!"

He said: "In the name of Heaven if there has been reported of me to you . . ."

"Why, nothing has been reported to me of you," she said. "Your patron has pleaded . . . But he knows that the worst has been reported to me of you so I do not know how he dares plead. . . ."

She went on again suddenly: "You men are unconscionable blunderers—all save your Mr. Patron Smith who is wicked, but not without heart. Or with too much heart. . . . Here at the beginning of my route you check me! My route was to have been a farewell. To you first, here in this cabaret."

He exclaimed: "But why here? Why here of all the spots in the world?"

She said: "You forget. Oh man of short memories. . . . It was here you should have come on the last day of my life, which was the 7th of July in this year of grace. So since you did not come I cut you out of my life, falling down on the floor. Had you been here—with your pure, stupid, earnest eyes; with your bright and varnished apple cheeks and your voice . . . Oh merciful Creator and Father of us all, it shakes me still. . . . Had you been here my mother might have died; my . . . your father might have. . . . There is however no knowing what these masterful, strong-drinking men may or may not do! But my husband surely would have had himself earlier guillotined. . . ."

"Oh Christ!" the boy cried, "in Christ's name. Your husband was not guillotined. He was shot and died like

a gentleman. After he was dead I took him by the hand!"

She let her skirts fall all round her on the ground; she let fall her riding-crop; her knees appeared to give way but she got to a seat that was near behind her.

"Oh, before the accursed wall!" she said. "His body lies there!"

"You could not come to it now," he exclaimed. "See, there are people crowding round."

"You would not let me come to him!" she said. "But none the less I will be the first to pray for his poor soul!" She clasped indeed her hands and sat with her pale lips moving. "Thus," she said, "I shall be to my life's end—praying for him—and you!"

"It is enough to appal Tamburlaine, this carnival of blood," the young man said.

She pointed suddenly to a seat that was three away and in front of the one where they sat. The dreary condensations of the hoar-frost from the naked branches made pools in the gravel around it.

"It was there he sat," she said, "when he gave himself for Michael Ney. Now he is dead."

She cried out: "And poor Aglaë. And poor Michael. Are we to think of no one but ourselves?"

Later she said: "It is strange. Fate wills that here I should hear how my husband Frederick died in front of the wall. But Michael Ney may well be standing before his butchers now and I shall not hear of it these many days. When I saw Michael Ney last night he kissed me on the forehead. I said: 'Your Highness . . . *mon Maréchal* . . .' He said: 'Call me Michael Ney, soon to be a little dust!' . . . He was not one to believe the false

promises of your patron, who swore to save him."

The young man was saying with an appalled voice:

"He said that— 'Soon to be a little dust!' Those words? Then . . ."

"When I told my husband, who was in the cell beside him—though I hardly could tell him for the tears, he was full of envy of Michael's saying . . . he said it was a proud thing to be able to say. He wished he might have the right to say that as he died!"

The young man stood appalled: those very words had been the last words of Frederick Scheffauer, Baron de Frèjus, who lay dead behind him. He had imagined his ears to deceive him at the time, but now he was convinced. . . . And Frèjus had asked for a tombstone bearing the one word: "*Amicus!*"—a friend. But then . . .

"I went last night to the Conciergerie with Aglaë," she said musingly. "But I came away alone because she had gone already . . . to the Tuileries, Felice said, to pray for mercy. . . . And now I shall never see Aglaë again. I loved her but I shall never see her again."

He exclaimed: "Not never! Oh, not never!"

She answered: "Oh yes, sin such as mine, sin nameless and unmentionable that daily I commit—and, oh, brother, brother! at the instance of intolerable tortures of the spirit—sin such as mine demands the immuring of the penitent—but oh, the impenitent, the impenitent. As yet the impenitent . . . What else could I say to you, beloved of my . . ."

"I shall go mad . . ." he cried out. "There are too many . . . too many strains. Bethink you if you can in conscience . . . From loyalty to a man . . . Or in

memory of a man . . . God forbid that I should in any way detract from the memory of a man who was so . . . so gay! . . . I tell you he died gay. . . .”

She had recovered herself, clenching her hands tight.

“Yes, he was gay,” she said. “‘Who rides so late along the way . . . *Compagnon de la Majolaine, Gai, gai, sur le quai*. . . .’ He hummed that in preference to all other tunes!” She said: “Come here! Sit beside me! Let us sit like brother and sister as we are to be.” She moved her face close, her eyes gazing into his so that a fluid influence from them seemed to pervade his whole being.

“You are to understand,” she said, “if it will console your poor heart, that it is not loyalty to any other man that could have kept me from your beloved arms! . . . But I am one that has sinned so deeply and in a manner so horrible that I am to be abhorred down the ages like the accursed demi-gods of Æschylus. . . . I am one whose touch will contaminate you and send you to hell amongst the shivering souls of our fathers. . . . I am one, the one creature in all the world that lives and breathes and loves, that you may not love. . . . I am the one of all the world between whom and your father’s son stands the angel with the flaming sword. . . .”

He stretched out his arms but she shrank to the furthest end of the seat. “Nay, do not touch me!” she cried out. “No! No! No!”

He said: “You talk of hell, though before God I cannot understand either what you say or how sin can now come into our relations. . . . But if our love made hell quiver to its fundament I cannot think that it could be more torture than this. . . . Why, hell must be simple



and sane. But not all the pictures of the Florentine, not all the imaginations of—I do not remember his name . . . This is a madness; this is torture. I do not know of what I may speak to you. . . .”

“How do you come here?” she asked. “What fiend sent you here to torment me? I never asked it. I would as soon have a solitary hell as one enhanced by the sharing.”

“It was Assheton Smith sent me. Bidding me be at nine by the wall at the Closerie des Lilas and report to him what I saw there. Why, I do not know . . . Why should he send me to be a witness of the murder of your husband?”

“Tell me then, at least, how he died!”

He told her—but though the event itself stamped itself irrevocably on his memory he never remembered after that what he had told her. There were things that in prudence he must conceal, surmises he might make, surmises he must keep to himself. But whether he observed them or not he never knew; the passion of love was overwhelming him in her presence. . . .

He had been awakened towards four that morning by Mr. Assheton Smith in the chamber in which he slept in that great man’s house. The milor, who was graver than usual, bade him direct his valet as to the packing of all his valises, for they were to start for le Havre that day at ten. He had said that that must mean that Marshal Ney was doomed, since they had only stayed to await the issue of the trial that had taken place the day before. Mr. Smith had said: “No! No! Not necessarily. I beg you to calm yourself.”

He had begged or ordered the young man to betake himself towards half past eight to the open Place at the Closerie des Lilas, there to see what he should see and then to come with all speed to the Porte St. Denis where a travelling berline should be awaiting them with his valises. . . . His heavy cases with implements, his two hunters, his tools, seeds, plate, furnishings and the like had already gone to Havre along with the Colemans, to their ship which they owned and which was bound for New Orleans. He was to go into exile at least nobly equipped and with the escort as far as le Havre of the finest gentleman in Europe.

So half past eight had seen him on the empty Place. He had taken coffee within the *estaminet* and when he came out there was already some company and a squad of infantry—the General Lamoricière, whose business it was to see that the behests of the Provost Marshal were being carried out, the Duc de la Force, other Ultra-Loyalists whom he knew by sight and the Berryers, father and son, the advocates who had defended the Marshal at his trials. And immediately at hand, approaching slowly, was a covered two-horse fiacre that was surrounded by not very soldierly soldiers and that had on its box an unmoved *cocher* and Gatti di Vivario, a white cockade in his shako. Gatti di Vivario had scrambled limply down from the box and, with the aspect of a commanding officer, had lined the men up in a double hedge from the fly door to where General Lamoricière stood with the squad of men. The young man had noticed that the number of the fiacre had been 413. The soldiers were singularly unsoldierly.

At that Hélène had commented that, in the last days,

the real soldiers guarding the Conciergerie had been replaced by young Ultras dressed as members of the royal bodyguard, so great had been the fear that, if the soldiers of the old Empire who were set to guard Ney retained that function, they might either let the Marshal escape or foment a revolution in the garrison of the capital. Gatti di Vivario had stated to her that he had only consented to accept the distasteful task of commanding the guard over the prisoners in order to ensure that these Ultras should do them no bodily harm or offer them any insults. As a matter of fact it might be strongly suspected that none of the guards had ever seen Marshal Ney before a week preceding his trial. . . .

That he was about to witness a military execution the young man was fully confident by the time he was five minutes out of the *estaminet*. His heart beat troublesomely at the thought that the victim might be Ney himself. The circumstances of the execution might seem very strange—on that solitary space, with so little pomp or seriousness, the Ultra gentry laughing continuously amongst themselves. But when you remembered the state of Paris, the seething discontent not only of Napoleon's old soldiers but that of the redoubtable workpeople in the Faubourg St. Antoine, there was little to be wondered at if the Royalists had decided to do their foul work in circumstances of as much secrecy as possible.

But it had been the husband of Hélène that he recognized in the bulky cloaked figure that descended from the hearse-like conveyance into the mists of early morning.

There had ensued preliminaries that, in his emotion, he had not followed. The first thing that had struck him was

that General Lamoricière approached the Duc de la Force and offered him his sword.

"I had suggested to your Highness," he said in a resonant voice, "this place as a good one for the execution of a prisoner of no note at a time when the sight of executions too frequently excite the people of Paris. But now that I see who the prisoner is I refuse to preside at this function and the officer in command of the firing squad refuses to give the command to fire. We both request leave to abandon the uniforms that we wear."

"Why," said the Duc, "it is no difficult matter to give a command to fire a gun, so I will even do it myself and thank you for the opportunity!"

"The General Lamoricière was the officer that arrested poor Frèjus on that bench," Hélène said. "No doubt that was what gave him the idea that this was a good solitary spot for the execution, just as that memory brought me here on the last moment before my departure."

So they had shot Frèjus by the ordinary process of military execution. When they had asked him if he had any requests he had answered at first in words that Feilding had only half caught. . . . "Write me down Michael Ney" . . . or it might have been Frederick de Frèjus! . . . "soon to be a little dust!" Then Feilding had caught his phrases when he had asked that Madame Ney should be requested to inscribe the one word *Amicus* on his tombstone—as who should say "my friend," or the friend who, in effect, gave his life for the Marshal.

He had stood to be shot very gallantly, a smile upon his lips. At the actual moment the young man had looked down at the ground.

Hélène had leaned forward to listen, her lips parted, her eyes now and then filling with tears. But at the last:

"Oh, my friend," she said, "what an end is this for all our glories and our demi-gods!" She was speaking in French when her voice was at its most beautiful and moving. "And I must go backwards through them to come to the place where I must be laid in the grave. From here to Malmaison, from there to Montereau, to Dijon, to Lyons. . . . Oh, my friend, my friend, what did we not see in our scintillating progress? . . ."

She laid suddenly her hand upon his wrist.

"Oh think," she said, "of that slope before Melun, in its deathless silence. . . ."

It was terrible—terrible indeed as to stand before an army set in array—to that young man to watch her eager, suddenly lit up face with the eyes that shone and gazed beyond him.

His perturbations were insupportable. Was he to tell her what her husband's last words had really been and the construction that unavoidably must be put in that case on them and the situation? She was going away; she might never learn. But if he told her might that not re-awaken the admiration for that man that he was certain was the cause of her denying herself to him? And he was now at his last minute. At his last minute. . . .

She was talking of the morning—it had been the 30th of March—when they had stood side by side on a great gentle declivity that led down to Melun, all but a plain below them. Across below them were troops—endless troops in line, the bayonets sparkling, the sound of music coming to them.



All that grey country had lain breathless, the army with its flanking batteries lying across the road to Paris. It went down to them as a ribbon might unroll on the slope of a desk and they were to do battle to close that road to the demi-god and his legions.

"There was not a sound, you remember!" she said. "You said the very fowls of the air forgot their courtships in the boughs!" They had stood on the edge of the forest knowing nothing of what was to come—on the edge of the forest very close to the road. Hand in hand in their breathlessness! The thunder of guns might burst from among the trees, or aligned horse or sullenly progressing lines of men in dark blue! One's heart became a pain!

Then there had come a little jingle . . . a little, little jingle from a distance behind. A roll of wheels: it went so quick.

"Oh friend, friend, do you not see them still. Is it in truth all gone? That cannot be." She gripped his hand closely, closely. . . . A small clatter of hoofs. A carriage and a few hussars . . . and he and Bertrand and Drouet . . . and down, down the hill with the rapidity of thought. . . . Don't you remember, don't you remember? . . . The hussars stayed by us. They were all alone under the eyes of a hundred thousand men arrayed to destroy them. And the lines breaking up . . . and the cries coming up to us. . . . And now . . . all gone. All that glory. All those demi-gods!"

His arms gripped her furiously; he was pouring kisses on her lips, her lids, her brows, her lips again. Bliss came down upon him. With his right hand behind her head



he forced her lips against his. They responded. Her cheeks were wet with tears. She lay in his arms. . . .

And then . . . it was unbelievable the force she exerted to push herself from him. She stood, her skirt all around on the ground, her hat pushed back, her hair dishevelled beneath the brim. Her eyes blazed at him as if they too possessed an electric force of repulsion. She stood, her mouth half open, panting for breath.

"What have you done? What have you done?" she cried out, "Accursed, accursed, accursed fool that you are. . . ."

The knowledge came to him hardly with her words; it had forced itself into him from her gestures and her eyes. . . . She had gone, wavering away, supporting herself by tree after tree before he again looked at the place where she had been.

## L'ENVOI

THE great berline lumbered slowly up the steep slope and swayed monstrosly on the water-torn winter road that leads beside the long, blank park wall of the château of Bussy-St. Georges. The rain that till lately had deluged the windows of the conveyance had dried on them; far away, a thin waft of opalescent cloud heralded the December sunset across the bare downland. A horseman came at full gallop following them, and having hailed to the driver to stop rapped with the handle of his crop on the closed off-window. The horseman came down on the road as the window dropped. He exclaimed:

"Come out, George, and let us walk awhile. This is a lonely spot and convenient for the Marshal to change his clothes." He called into the carriage: "Monsieur, Madame Aglaë was released within the half-hour. She is safe in her own house and bade me bid you again Godspeed for her and your children!"

Mr. Assheton Smith undid the collar of his great mantle to give himself air and shook his hat to get rid of the rain-drops on the beaver. When George Feilding descended at his side they walked pensively along a rutty field-path that led over the wet down; the beautiful chestnut followed them, its nostrils continually almost brushing its master's hands that were clasped behind his back.

"Tomorrow to the Quorn!" Mr. Assheton Smith said.

"What would you not give, my lad, to have within four days a gallop in our great fields of the grass countries? . . . It is the only sensible life. . . ."

George Feilding preserved a long silence, his head hanging on his chest, his face without expression.

"Poor lad!" Mr. Smith said. "Yet I understand they can give you some notable gallops in Louisiana. The hounds are Pytchley-bred; but if you cannot have Quorn, Pytchley will serve the turn." Since the young man maintained his silence he began again. "Your father is said to have had the run of the season last Saturday was a sen-night. . . . An old dog fox with a grey-tufted tail! There is an account of the run in *Galignani's Messenger* and your father is spoken of encomiastically!"

George said: "My father is one of the last men I desire to hear spoken of with encomium at this moment, and if this is what the chase of the fox leads to I had as lief never look upon a hound again."

Mr. Assheton Smith exclaimed:

"How have Tufter and Merrylegs and Old Towler and the rest contributed to your predicament? . . ."

"Why," George answered with passion, "bawling after the hounds leads to drunkenness, drunkenness to lechery, lechery to incest and worse. . . . And you will all be demi-gods? . . . Where are we? What do we do here?"

"You do not know where you are?" Mr. Smith asked. "You are on the road to Havre by roundabout ways and so to the Americas by ship!"

George said: "Aye? . . . That is the way of it? You disposed of the banker; now you dispose of me and . . .

Was that Ney in the fly with me? . . . Well then, you dispose of Ney too. . . . My father has robbed me monstrously because I let him cut the entail. He would have had my land on Barbados if I had not read the deeds till I was blind!"

Mr. Assheton Smith exclaimed: "I call to your attention that you have called my berline a 'fly,' but it is the best appointed travelling carriage in Europe. Napoleon himself envied me its possession, yet you style it a 'fly'!"

"I did not know it was your berline," George said; "I did not know where I was nor how I came there. . . . I saw the banker murdered. I met his wife. . . . You had appointed the Porte St. Denis for a rendezvous. I do not know how I came there."

"It is true you were monstrous glum when you came there," Mr. Assheton Smith said. "You were in the cart of a peasant that was going back to St. Denis from Paris market."

"Ah," George said, "I remember a hairy man with one eye that said he had seen King Louis. King Louis lay at St. Denis on the night before his entry into Paris. It is a pity he is not in the tomb of his ancestors who lie there."

"I too," Mr. Smith maintained, "have had a monstrous active day. . . . There is a snifter of rain coming. Let us see if these trees will shelter us."

There was a small plantation of wind-driven low trees at the top of the slope they had mounted and in the plantation were a shepherd's hut that smelt vilely and a stone crucifix with a mossy-green Christ dependent from

its cross. Mr. Smith led his horse into the hut for he did not like his saddle to be wetted; but he emerged himself, for weather was nothing to him. He approached and inspected the crucifix, said that the planting of these objects in solitary places was a not disagreeable superstition and that he liked to see shepherdesses kneeling on their steps and telling their beads. Then he repeated that he too had had a monstrous busy day. From four in the morning, when he had awakened George, he had not sat down but had been on his feet or in the saddle.

"Well, you have had a worse day than I," George said. "God forgive me for saying a worse day since He appointed this day for my punishment upon earth. But you have run about more. For me I slept in the carriage. I will admit that your berline is comfortable. If you like I will declare that there cannot be better springs in Europe." He added:

"I should have slept better if the monstrous woman you provided for my companionship had not repeatedly awaked me to inquire where was her sword. At one place—I think it was Pomponne—where we changed horses she was for going back to get her sword. I did not know if it was I or she that was mad." He added: "Forgive me. It is your adventures that I must hear, not you mine. I am perhaps mad!"

"Why," Mr. Smith said, "at four I rose. At five I assumed a French general's uniform that had been provided me by my friend Decazes and who had sent me also a trooper to smoothe my way. By six I was at Madame Ney's. . . ."

"By heavens!" the young man exclaimed, "how could

you find it in your heart to go there? . . . You went perhaps also to the Hotel Monchelu!"

Mr. Smith looked at the young man with concern: even with anxiety.

"If," he said, "the mention of these places—the associations—so affect you I had better not proceed. . . ."

"Why," the young man said, "you forget we had a monstrously painful scene in the salon of Madame Aglaë. . . . It appeared to me to be you that were that day mad with concern. As today I am. But even so I could not go to that house again!"

Mr. Smith had grown a little pallid, his face peaked.

"You are perhaps not aware," he said, "that that lady finally decided to follow the chimæra called Alexander!"

George said: "No. I was not aware of it. You did not honour me with your confidence!"

"Why, no," Mr. Smith said, "that is not the way it was. I was anxious after a moment of weakness which you witnessed to bear myself with stoicism so great that you should not yourself divine the news. I tell it you now and you perceive my calm . . . Madame de Krudener left Paris for Russia on the twentieth of November—ten days after that painful affair with Alexander and twenty-seven days before this date."

"Why, you have made progress since then," George said; "I think your condition was that day more pitiable than my own. It is not so today!"

"Come," Mr. Smith said, "let us hold to the business in hand or we shall go mad . . . I cannot understand a lady . . . any lady . . . preferring the Tsar of Russia to an English gentleman. . . . Madame however seems to have



exhibited that preference. . . . I confess that at the time it mortified me!"

George said: "This is all very difficult to understand. . . . Let us summarize. . . . I am dazed because my sister—my spouse, as the Bible says, has turned out to be so much my sister and so little my spouse. . . . You, you burst into the *salon*—on the ninth or tenth of November, a month or so ago, after the Court Martial had declared its incompetence to try the Marshal who is now changing from woman's to man's clothes in your berline. . . ."

Mr. Assheton Smith said: "Let us try to retain some sanity. . . ."

His chestnut whinnied disquietedly from the shepherd's hut.

"Josiah!" Mr. Smith said—Josiah was the chestnut's name—"it will not be long now!" He said: "At any rate, say what you may, I have saved the life of the Prince de la Moskwa!"

"It seems," the boy said, "rather like going out of the back door when you might have entered by the front porch!"

"Why," the Master of the Quorn exclaimed, "I might have had a free pardon from Alexander, for the Marshal!"

"The Tsar found you in Madame de Krudener's arms!" the boy said. "He was bringing his demand for the free pardon of the Marshal when he found you in Madame de Krudener's embrace!"

Mr. Assheton Smith retained a complete silence. The boy said:

"On finding you in Madame de Krudener's arms the Tsar tore up his application for the free pardon of Marshal Ney! So I say it appears to be an exit by the back door when you might have entered by the porch. . . . You sacrificed my Hélène's husband so that Ney might ask for his sword in your berline!"

"The Marshal attaches a great value to his sword," Mr. Assheton Smith said. "It was given to him by Bonaparte after Aboukir. It should be the sword of the Prophet as worn by Achmet Abdullah. . . . There are inscriptions to that effect upon it!"

"They are worn off!" the boy answered. "What were we talking about?"

"I went," the milor said, "to the house of Madame Aglaë. I waited without, of course; I did not go into the *salon*! . . . She came. Wonderfully bundled up in clothes. . . . It is extraordinary the ingenuity of women!"

"She resembled, no doubt," the boy said, "the figure with which, since nine, I have sat in your berline!"

"I proceed," the milor said, "in my French general's uniform with the trooper in the rumble . . . to the Conciergerie. There I found your friend Gatti di Vivario . . . in command of the guard!"

He added, with an attempt after dignity:

"I must tell you I had prepared all this. Every step of this I had prepared!"

"It would surely have been easier," the boy said, "if you had not fallen into the arms of Madame de Krudener!"

"She is a most extraordinary woman!" Mr. Smith said.

"Well?" the younger man had asked.

His mind went back unceasingly to the afternoon of November 10th.

He had been in the salon of Madame Ney waiting for her to come and explain to him why she had shut her house to him when he had desired to see Madame de Frèjus, who was boarding with her. Presumably because Madame Ney was there, the Alsatian maid had admitted to that draped *salon* first Mr. Assheton Smith, then Mr. Coleman, an English banker, and his American niece, the daughter of Mr. Coleman's brother.

Mr. Coleman had brought money so that Madame Ney might defray the costs to the State of her husband's trial. Anyone is welcome who brings money. But Mr. Assheton Smith had run about that *salon* with its busts of the Maréchal and the Maréchale Ney as if he had been mad. He had cried out or suggested or hinted that if he had been willing to acknowledge—or declare—himself to be Jesus Christ the Tsar Alexander would have delivered the free pardon for Marshal Ney to Madame de Krudener. Or he might have acknowledged himself to be anti-Christ.

Mr. Assheton Smith had said—in that *salon*—to the young Feilding:

"You have several times called me demi-god. But to pretend that I am our Redeemer I am too modest. To pretend that I am anti-Christ I will not, for I too much love our Redeemer!"

As far as the young man could tell, Mr. Smith had em-

braced Madame de Krudener. He was the richest, or the second richest man in the world. The Tsar may have been richer. Or he may not.

At any rate, the Tsar, coming back with the application for the pardon of Ney in his pallid hands, had found Mr. Assheton Smith in the arms of Madame de Krudener. Apparently Madame de Krudener had cried to Mr. Assheton Smith to declare that he was a supernatural visitant. In that case all should have been excused by the Tsar.

But that Mr. Smith had not been able to do. He would be neither the Redeemer nor anti-Christ, though either would have done for the lady. He was the Master of the Quorn Hounds—a prouder title to fame than that of Ruler of all the Russias!

So the Tsar had simply torn up his letter to Louis XVIII or Wellington or to whomever it might have been addressed.

It was that that in the *salon* of Madame Aglaë Mr. Smith had run about from one to the other trying to say. It had been a horrible experience! Madame Aglaë had been the only one to keep her head. She had said that it was no matter—as if the pardoning of one's husband had been no more than someone tramping on one's toes in a public diligence. Nevertheless she had stuck to the main point: Mr. Assheton Smith had sworn that the whole of his enormous wealth should be devoted to the saving of Ney whether it meant the bribing of the Comte Decazes or Louis XVIII himself or any other man. Madame Aglaë had said:

"To that I shall hold you, milor!"

He himself, George Feilding, had desired to do physical violence to Mr. Smith, but Bessie Coleman had held him back with both hands on his chest. He, George Feilding, had taken the view that any man who had come so near the honourable saving of such another man as Marshal Ney and had then abandoned that act of saving because a woman's arms were stretched out to him . . . any such man should at least be given a bloody nose. . . . Bessie Coleman had held him back.

Well, it appeared that Madame Aglaë, dressing herself up in a wilderness of clothes, had simply gone to the Conciergerie under the escort of Mr. Assheton Smith—Mr. Assheton Smith being in the costume of a French general. The Colonel Count dei Gatti di Vivario had done the rest. The Baron de Frèjus had been led out to execution at eight thirty—but Marshal Ney had descended to a hackney cab in his wife's clothes at seven fifteen. At that time of the morning it is still dark on the Île de la Cité. . . .

The awkwardness, the difficulty—according to Mr. Smith—had lain in the disposal of the hours between seven fifteen and ten. The Marshal had proved very intractable. He disliked leaving his wife in a cell and he still more disliked being parted from the sword of the Prophet. They had stopped the fiacre at the Halles to give him coffee at seven forty-five; they had driven to Auteuil, which they had reached at eight forty. . . .

It was important that the Marshal should not appear in his men's clothes before his official existence was ended.

For, after nine o'clock or thereabouts, there would be no more Marshal Ney. . . .

Standing in the light rain, in the leafless grove by the crucifix near Bussy-St. Georges, Mr. Assheton Smith held up his crop to bid George Feilding listen to a sound that was coming to their ears—a full, muffled bell-sound, coming over the saturated ploughlands and the black fallows. It had grown very cold and the lamentable sound made them shiver.

“That,” Mr. Assheton Smith said, “is the *glas*—the passing bell—for Michael Ney, Marshal of France, Duc d’Elchingen, Prince de la Moskwa. . . .” Mr. Smith, who did nothing that he did do by halves, had sent courriers ahead of the road that George Feilding and Ney were to follow. The courriers bore official intimations to the maires and prefects of the towns concerned—to the effect that Michael Ney and the rest of it had expiated his crimes before a squad of infantry in front of the wall of the Closerie des Lilas at nine o'clock of that morning, the 8th of December, 1815. Villages that were mostly Bonapartist, like Bussy-St. Georges, whose naked steeple rose near George Feilding and Mr. Smith . . . Bonapartist villages might sound for him the passing bell; villages where most inhabitants were Royalists might illuminate their windows. . . . Michael Ney himself had no existence and might from then on dress in men’s or women’s clothes and wear or lose the sword of the Prophet. . . .

“So that,” Mr. Smith said, “I imagine myself not to have done so ill!”

The young man was at that moment full of hatred for this muscular, fatuous master of foxhounds.



"In what do you imagine yourself to have done so well, milor?" he asked. "If you had delayed to fold Madame de Krudener in your arms for half an hour . . . for ten minutes . . . for five . . . for two . . . why, you could have gone to bed with her at six thirty if the Tsar had not found you in her arms at six. . . . If you had delayed two minutes you might have spared humanity a blot on its name!"

"This," Mr. Smith said, "is a great pother for a very ordinary man. . . . Let me ask you this. . . . If Hélène de Frèjus rose up before you here, holding out her arms and crying that you were her demi-god . . ."

"I think I should avert my face," George Feilding said. . . .

"But if," Mr. Smith said, "she did it to the odour of incense, in the light of ceremonial candles . . . If she passed for the mistress of the Tsar whom you despise as all English gentlemen should despise these foreign potentates . . . If all mystery, whether of heaven or earth, if all allurements whether of angels or fiends, attached to the hem of her garments . . . If your senses reeled at her approach . . . if islands, peninsulas, continents seemed only to exist in order that you might carry her to them and there live . . ."

"Why, I do not know what I should do!" George Feilding said.

"I however do!" said Mr. Assheton Smith. "You would seek to go out at the back door since you might not by the ceremonial perron. . . . You say: it is nothing to have saved Ney alive since he may not swagger with the sword

of the Prophet in the mirrored halls of the Tuileries. . . .”

“I do not say that it is nothing,” George Feilding said; “to be sure there is Madame Aglaë to be considered!”

“It was I then,” Mr. Assheton Smith said, “that considered her. It was I that contrived these schemes that shall in no way redound to my credit since I may not avow them—or if I avowed them no one would believe them. . . . It was I that perceived the folly of the enemies of Ney in setting to guard him Royalists that had never seen his face. . . .”

“At the execution of Frèjus,” the young man said, “they marched very badly!”

“It was I,” Mr. Smith said, “that conceived the idea of setting Gatti di Vivario as guard of the two prisoners. All that he had to do was to say to the guards appointed to guard Ney: “Here is Ney!” when in truth it was Frèjus, and “Here is Frèjus!” when in truth it was Ney. . . . So Frèjus went to the death of Ney and Madame Aglaë changed clothes with her husband, having taken care that the clothes she had were ample and enormous. . . . When they come upon her, Ney being gone, what could they do with her but beg her to be gone too. Besides Louis himself—and his minion Decazes—were of the party, partly because of tender feelings, partly because of my gold. As for Frèjus—who is to bother his head if one more or less be dead or missing? It was supposed to be Frèjus who escaped; but if he do not ask them for their debts few will care.”

He was standing with one foot on the base of the cru-

cifix in the rapidly darkening wood. His horse whinnied again from the shepherd's hut.

He said: "Wait, Josiah!" to the horse and then: "All that sounds difficult. . . . Yet I assure you it was an easy matter compared to getting hounds up wind to a fox, and nothing at all beside the problem of dealing with mange in your country. . . . I will tell you: in fifteen years or so you shall have children by Bessie Coleman as I suspect. Or by some other girl. . . . Let them come on their ponies to the meet at the Quorn. I will guarantee bleeding to one and at least the pads to the other; favouritism I will not show but I believe your stock will deserve it. . . . And what Order shall be the equal of those won without favour at the tail of good hounds? Is it the Cross of St. Louis; is it the Legion of Honour of the ex-Emperor? . . ."

"Squire," the young man said, "you would not say that if you had seen what I saw before Grenoble—for to take honours at the hands of such a man must in reason transcend the red honours of the hunting field. . . . I saw him, with these two eyes, advance towards the hostile troops of the King, having behind him only a few guards with their arms reversed. . . . And says Napoleon: 'If any man will take the life of his Emperor . . .'"

Mr. Smith yawned a little and excused himself on the score of having been up at four. It was nearly dark in the wood and the horse again whinnied uneasily.

"Why, come Josiah," Mr. Smith said, but before the horse was there he tapped with his crop the feet of the figure on the crucifix. "If," he said, "you insist on matching valours with me, put this one first. I will ride through

a bullfinch of thorns before any man or devil created; you will cry up your Napoleon marching unarmed and with breast bared up to hostile troops. But these are the actions of those who are a little less than gods. I would not hang upon a cross in a dark wood, having suffered all that went before; nor yet would Napoleon! Nor yet would he who is—who was!—styled the Bravest of the Brave." He shivered, standing with his left foot in the stirrup of his horse.

"It is curious to consider," he said, "that most of these troubles arose because I would have had you tell me stories of the expedition of Napoleon, yet the first that you have told me you told me just now and it is like to be the last."

He swung himself, a black mass, into his saddle.

"I cannot let Josiah stand longer," he said; "the merciful man is merciful also to his beast. . . . If you make for the lights of the carriage you will come to it!"

The lights of the carriage had indeed just been lit; those of the village and the church on the crest of the slope shone red behind lattices.

"I had thought," Mr. Smith said, "to have gone with you as far as le Havre. But I find I have not the time; the Quorn calls me too loudly. I shall give the driver his directions as I pass. And I wish you well!"

He touched his horse with the spur and it went away downhill.

*New York*, JANUARY 9—*Paris*, FEBRUARY 4—*New York*, MAY 21—JULY 11, 1928.

